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Identifying Mothers' and Children's Use and Perceptions of Power in their Relationship

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Of  
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## ABSTRACT

### Identifying Mothers' and Children's Use and Perceptions of Power in their Relationship

Sandra Della Porta

This study investigated attributes of power in the parent-child relationship. This concept was examined in three domains of conflict: personal, conventional, and prudential. Forty-one children (20 boys, 21 girls) ranging from seven to 12 years ( $M = 10.12$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) and their mothers from a middle-class background participated in this study. This research assessed parents and children's perceptions of the types and level of power (French & Raven, 1959) through an interview consisting of 12 conflict-provoking situations. The dyad completed the Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PCRQ; Furman & Giberson, 1995) and mothers completed the Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R; Reitman et. al., 2002), Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004), and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SD; Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972). Results show that in the personal domain, children were rated as having more power, and in both the conventional and prudential domains, mothers were rated as having more power. Children of mothers with an authoritarian parenting style rated the mother as having more power in the personal, conventional, and prudential domains, while mothers rated themselves as having more power in the prudential domain. Permissive parenting was related to children rating themselves as having more power in the prudential domain. For types of power, mothers used more coercive and information power than their children, whereas children used more legitimate and sneaky power. This research may aid in parents' understanding that use of power could differ across domains.

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## Introduction

Recently, there has been a change in parents' beliefs about child development and parenting strategies reflected by the shift in the balance of power from the parent to the child (Elkind, 1994). Previous efforts to study power in the parent-child relationship have been largely thwarted by the underwhelming amount of research currently available on the topic. This analysis contributes to the database of knowledge by pinpointing the types of power used by parents and children as well as depicting how they perceive the use of power during conflict situations.

The relationship between parents and children is fascinating but complex, as it encompasses a close interdependence of behaviours, a combination of emotions, needs, and goals, as well as a variety of interactions that make up a history between partners (Kuczynski, 2003). Overarching theoretical models that depict such close relationships revolve around three fundamental assumptions: causality, agency, and power (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). Causality is viewed in terms of socialization, focusing on compliance and internalization of values. Agency views individuals as actors with the ability to make sense of their environment, initiate change, and make choices (Kuczynski, 2003). Finally, the topic of power in social relationships is a dynamic process consisting of various resources possessed on different levels by each partner in the dyad. According to Lollis and Kuczynski (1997), in the past 30 years, these assumptions have shifted toward parent-child bidirectionality, away from a more unidirectional view (i.e., parent to child).

Lollis and Kuczynski (1997) describe bidirectionality as a two-way mutual or reciprocal influence in interactions and relationships. In this close relationship both parents and children contribute through actions, thoughts, and emotions forming a

dynamic bond (Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). A crucial factor in the reciprocal nature of the parent-child dyad is equal agency, acknowledging that children have individual ideas, beliefs, and knowledge about their relationship (Cummings & Schermerhorn, 2003). In earlier models, parents were described as active agents and children as passive recipients, whose behaviours of agency (e.g., noncompliance) were labeled as deviance (Kuczynski, 2003; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). Further elaborating, Kuczynski (2003) suggested that this portrayed a constrained view of children's agency, ignoring a child's own experiences and perspectives, effectively eliminating their own active role in the socialization process.

Accompanying the change from the unidirectional to bidirectional model of the parent-child relationship, a shift in parents' beliefs about child development and parenting strategies occurred. More specifically, there has been a significant change in parental values towards a greater preference for autonomy in children's decision-making and less preference for obedience (Alwin, 1990). This recent favouring of autonomy in children is linked to the idea of children as active agents, which requires a give and take socialization approach, providing children with options and choices to create situations where they will comply (Greishaber, 2004).

Kuczynski (2003) defines autonomy as self-determined motivation to attain personal control over the environment. On the one hand, this type of behaviour has been associated with various positive effects on child development, such as intrinsic motivation, greater creativity, higher cognitive flexibility, better conceptual learning, positive emotional tone, and higher self-esteem, to name a few (Deci & Ryan, 1987). On the contrary, Kuczynski (2003) contends that children's assertion of autonomy in the

parent-child relationship has been associated with high levels of noncompliance, which can be unfavourable to parents.

Although much research has looked at the positive effects of teaching autonomy to children as opposed to teaching obedience, few researchers have focused on the outermost part of this pendulum swing where some parents may be allowing children a great deal of freedom and power in decision-making. That is, the balance of power and authority in the parent-child relationship, as has been argued by some (e.g., Elkind, 1994), may have shifted from adults to children. However, there has been little research in support of this argument as well as little inquiry into the dyads' perceptions of this construct as it occurs in their relationship.

According to Lollis and Kuczynski (1997), "power consists of different resources (French & Raven) that are managed differently across family types (Baumrind) and are constantly negotiated within relationships, across relationships, and across development" (p. 448). Power itself is best considered as a variable that is subject to bidirectional processes in which both parents and children are vulnerable and influential with regard to each other (Greishaber, 2004; Lollis & Kuczynski, 1997). As such, a careful analysis of issues of power in parent-child relationships may illuminate greater understanding of these ideas. Thus, the objective of this research is to fill the gap in the knowledge by identifying how parents and children view and use power in their parent-child interactions, particularly in the context of conflict. Conflict will be used as a window to identify the dyads' use of power as it is often triggered by the struggle between children's autonomy seeking behaviours and parental control attempts. This is clearly a context in which to examine bidirectional processes (Bush & Peterson, 2008).

### *Power*

The construct of power is multifaceted, consisting of individual, relational, and cultural resources (Greishaber, 2004; Kuczynski, 2003). It is defined as the potential ability of one person to change the direction of another person's behaviour, which is accomplished by using forces to exert influence on another (Wolfe, 1959). From Punch's (2005) perspective, power can generally be understood as "getting what you want" (p. 172). One important aspect of power is that it is never static, varying over time and space (Wolfe, 1959). Explanations of power are described as part of social relationships and not personal attributes, therefore all social criteria influence sources of power, which can vary from relationship to relationship and even within the same relationship in a different social context.

Wolfe (1959) identifies three assumptions about the nature of individuals and interpersonal relations that directly affect the use of power. First, he emphasizes that all individuals are constantly trying to satisfy their wants and needs as well as attaining their own goals. Wolfe further mentions that these are attained through social interaction. During these interactions, a continual exchange of resources between actors makes possible the fulfillment of these needs and goals. In effect, the resources that one has in their possession can be transferred to the other socially to meet specific objectives that s/he may have (Wolfe, 1959). Consequently, the more resources one has in his or her control, the more power one wields.

When studying power in the parent-child relationship, it is important to decipher its characteristics conceptually from parental control. According to Barber (2002), there are two main types of parenting behaviour: parental support, such as warmth,

responsiveness, and attachment and parental control, including discipline, coercion, and love withdrawal. When studying parental use of power, parental support and control are theoretically related as these concepts underlie parenting style characteristics. But these concepts are not directly related to power types as discussed in the next section.

### *Types of Power*

French and Raven (1959) distinguish between different kinds of power including coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, expert, and information power, which can account for the various effects of social influence. As each type of power is defined, examples will be brought up in the context of parent-child relationships.

Coercive power occurs when the recipient expects that s/he will be punished if s/he fails to conform to requests. The parent who is physically larger and holds more authority over the child has the ability to execute this negative form of power.

On the lighter side of power execution is reward power. The explanation is contained within the label, as a person holds power on the basis of the ability to reward the other. The strength of this partner's power increases with the magnitude of the reward. In the parent-child dyad, parents can reward children with positive (e.g., verbal praise) or negative (e.g., stop hassling child once chores are done) reinforcements or materials goods. Further, both parents and children can reward each other by displaying positive affect (e.g., hugging). Punch (2005) identifies resource power as a separate type of power that seems to be linked to characteristics of reward power, where access to resources is the mediator. For example, parents control children's access to income, material goods, as well as their allocation of time and space. Parents have more power



over household resources and therefore, power over their children. With such resources, parents can enforce punishment or discipline, enhancing legitimate power (Punch, 2005).

Legitimate power stems from internalized values in the recipient, which dictate that the person in power has a legitimate right to influence their behaviour. According to Punch (2005), parental legitimate power is linked to their inherent roles as protectors and providers, nurturing children's well-being. French and Raven (1959) further describe multiple bases of legitimate power including cultural values, social structure, and designation of legitimizing agent. The basis of cultural values allows a person possessing certain characteristics to hold power over others specified by the culture. Cultural resources involve rights conveyed to parents and children by the laws, customs, and practices evident of a particular culture.

Parental power is legitimate in that parents are explicitly given the authority to set rules that children must follow. Western culture also legitimizes children's power and constrains parents' use of power. This has developed from an increase in children's rights in the Western World, including standards of care, right to education, freedom from maltreatment, freedom of self-expression, and norms of companionate parent-child relationships (Punch, 2005). In relation to the basis of social structure, the recipient accepts the power of another as the right of the social organization of their group or society involving hierarchy. Finally, designation of legitimizing agent is a basis of power where an influencer is seen as legitimate because the recipient has accepted the situation at hand.

The last three types of power identified by French and Raven (1959) are referent, expert, and information power. Referent power is based on identification with a specific

person. Therefore, if one is highly attracted to another or wants to maintain a relationship with that individual, the power will reside in that person. Expert power is granted on the basis of one individual having advanced knowledge within a particular domain, which can favour either person depending on the type of knowledge held. Information power is based on one's ability to persuade another using logic and reasoning.

Beyond the initial six types of power bases are two additional power resources relevant to this study, negotiation and sneaky power. Negotiation and sneaky power were identified during the interview coding process post-data collection. Negotiation power was defined as an actor offering a compromise to resolve a conflict (e.g., actor offering a to wear a sweater instead of a jacket when it is cold outside).

Sneaky power was identified by researchers and defined as using deception to get what one wants. According to Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) by Buller and Burgoon (1996, as cited by Gombos, 2007), deception is a process that involves two-way interactive communication, in which the liar and the target are involved in a simultaneous task. In this study, both mother and child are involved in the task of resolving a conflict. As an example, parents have stated that they would find ways to detract their child from getting what they want as stated by a child "she [mom] would constantly tell me about it [school activity] and tell me things that would be interesting about it, some of them would be lies, some of them would be true". Similarly, incidents arose in which a child would say to their mother, "I'll do it later", not intending to do it at all. In another example, a child indicated that they would "put the vegetables in my mouth, go to the bathroom and spit it out without mom knowing". Basically researchers defined this as

getting what they want in a deceptive way, without directly affecting the other partner in the dyad.

With all of these types of power in mind, it is important to be aware that the range of power varies greatly. Most of these sources of power apply to young children because of their capacity to engage in interaction and reward or punish parental behavior (Perlman, Siddiqui, Ram, & Ross, 1999). More specifically, both parties in a relationship (e.g., sibling, parent-child) may have a small amount of power in all domains or one's power may vary across domains and time. Also, it is how power is used that may determine the impact on one another.

In terms of the parent-child relationship, power is an interdependent asymmetry considering both parents and children have resources to draw upon despite absolute differences in power. Traditional conceptions of power asymmetry in the parent-child relationship have been static, primarily emphasizing that parents have more power than children. However, as previously mentioned, recent research has shown that this assumption is not representative in understanding the occurrences of everyday family life (Kuczynski, 2003). For instance, parents seem comfortable accepting influence from their children (e.g., choosing a meal for dinner) and tolerate conflict as part of a cooperative parent-child relationship (Kuczynski, 2003). Further, Punch (2005) explains that children not only have strategies for counteracting adult power, but they are also active agents with the ability to assert power over adults. Accordingly, this research will take into account the horizontal features in today's social power relations, which according to Perlman et al. (1999), have rarely been used by personal relationships researchers.

### *Sources of Power*

In the parent-child relationship, there are various sources of power held in varying degrees by different partners as identified by Kuczynski (2003). Individual resources consisting of physical strength, control over rewards, expertise, and information are viewed as foundations of parental power. Executive power, which is the capacity to think ahead, set goals, and act proactively to prevent future problems, is another example of a primarily parental source of power, which can direct the course of social interaction.

Relational resources allow one to generate power as a participant in an interdependent relationship; therefore, parents and children are mutually dependent and can either grant or deny gratification. This leads to an ideal example portraying the complexity of the parent-child relationship where parents can use coercive power to obtain the compliance of their children; however, because compliance is an important attribute for parental feelings of competence, the parent then becomes dependent on the child for that type of gratification. In this case, the child can withhold compliance from the parent and exert power. Conversely, parental use of autonomy support may lead to child compliance and child and parental competence, leading to a more positive relationship.

According to Punch (2005), in contemporary times, children actively challenge parental authority, and she notes that families are more likely to be sites of negotiation rather than control and regulation. This does not come as a surprise since children today may have greater access to exponential power as active social agents and can exert such power through resistance and noncompliance. It is important to keep in mind that different parenting styles are associated with children's varied ability to exert power within the family (Punch, 2005). This topic is now addressed.

### *Power and Parenting Style*

Baumrind's (1966) classic parenting styles initially associated with parental control can be associated with the amount of power exerted by both parents and children. The authoritative style of parenting is regarded as the gold standard in Western culture as it encourages children to become cooperative, content, and self-controlled (Berns, 2004). This democratic style of parenting includes characteristics such as warmth, responsiveness, reasoning, negotiation, and easy-going give and take parent-child interactions (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001). This category of parenting, according to Greishaber (2004), is in line with relational perspectives, which oppose the idea of parents as authority figures and instead views parents and children as mutually powerful and vulnerable towards each other, regardless of apparent differences in legitimate authority, individual capacities, and material resources. The authoritative style of parenting then seems to allow for a balance of power between the parent and child, although there may be situations where parents do exert power (e.g., safety). According to Bush and Peterson (2008), this parenting style has been linked to desirable adaptive skills in children, such as high levels of self-esteem, social skills, and school performance.

Authoritarian parents view children as passive and use more behaviourist approaches, favouring punitive, forceful measures as these parents strongly value obedience (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001). This style of parenting would allocate most of the power to parents and be associated with negative child behaviours such as fear, distrust, and discontent (Berns, 2004). In terms of child outcomes, this type of parenting has been associated with problematic behaviours, including noncompliance,

internalizing and externalizing behaviours (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Bush & Peterson, 2008).

At the other end of the parenting style spectrum is permissive parenting, characterized by a lack of follow-through and disregard of misbehaviour, where parents use nonpunitive measures, accepting the child's impulses and desires (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001). This behaviour is associated with a failure to enculturate children successfully as well as failing to appropriately manage children's behaviour (Greishaber, 2001). Execution of such parenting strategies could lead to child behaviours of aggressiveness, impulsiveness, and lack of self-control (Berns, 2004). According to Greishaber (2001), "refusal to conform to ordinary rules and conventions of society threatens the social and moral order because such children continually challenge society's positioning of adults as authority figures" (p. 227). Children living with permissive parents, according to Bush and Peterson (2008), are more likely to associate with deviant peers, have low motivation, and develop externalizing behaviours.

The fourth type of parenting, uninvolved, is described by low control and low warmth, in which parents have few demands on and are withdrawn from the child. This form of parenting has been associated with deficits in attachment, cognition, and self-esteem. This style would lack power assertive behaviours in both parents and their children, as their relationship is characterized by disconnectedness.

#### *Power and Child Outcomes*

Broadly, these parenting styles, along with parental behaviours and characteristics, contribute to various social and psychological child outcomes (Bush & Peterson, 2008). Through various types of parenting, social competence can either be

fostered, allowing children to adapt normative behaviours and values, or hindered, possibly leading to internalizing or externalizing problem behaviours, such as anxiousness or conduct problems, respectively (Bush & Peterson, 2008). Therefore, this research will investigate whether levels of power in the parent child-relationship, theoretically related to parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966), are associated with certain child outcomes, as previously outlined.

In short, it is important to be aware that power in the parent-child relationship may moderate the association between parenting styles and child outcomes. For instance, authoritative parenting is characterized by reciprocal attributes, including responsiveness, reasoning, negotiation, and a give and take relationship (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001). This should reflect a balanced amount of power, in that parents discuss and listen to their children when parenting, which has been associated with positive outcomes such as independent behavior and social responsibility (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritarian parenting behaviours, which favour controlling, punitive, and forceful measures (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001), weighs power heavily on the parent's side of the parent-child relationship. This imbalance may then lead to negative child outcomes such as internalizing and externalizing behaviours (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Bush & Peterson, 2008). Finally, permissive parenting, including a lack of follow-through and accepting the child's impulses and desires (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001), allows the child more power in the dyad, possibly leading to externalizing behaviours (Bush & Peterson, 2008).

### *Power and Development*

Another crucial element to consider when studying power in the parent-child relationship is that the child's resources for qualitative and quantitative power change throughout development as they acquire greater social-emotional skills and cognitive ability and begin to self-regulate behaviour. Parenting interactions also change, as the child grows older; therefore, the developmental variations between the dyad involve mutual adjustments on behalf of each party. As their respective roles change, their relationship network must adapt continually to the shifting capacities and needs that emerge (Collins & Madsen, 2003).

In terms of power, Kuczynski (2003) explains that asymmetry is quite high during the early years of development, favouring the infant, decreases during middle childhood, and increases again during adolescence as children's physical strength and other cognitive abilities progress to an equal or greater level than those of the parent. Collins and Madsen (2003) mention that although parent-child interactions become less frequent in middle childhood, previously shared experiences have created expectancies about the probable reactions of both parents and children to various kinds of situations. These expectancies then guide each person's behaviour in interaction with the other. Further, during middle childhood, children have increased capacity for independence, goal-directed behaviour, and effective communication (Collins & Madsen, 2003). Hence the focus of the proposed research will tap into children's perceptions of power in the parent-child relationship in middle childhood, as by this time they have developed a repertoire of interactions that have created expectancies of future behaviours within their relationship. Further, school-aged children are able to evaluate themselves from the perspective of



others and are more likely to evaluate themselves in terms of psychological characteristics (e.g., being well behaved, smart; Cummings & Schermerhorn, 2003). This study examined parents' and children's perspectives, specifically through the context of conflict, which will be described below. However, first the role of perceptions in the parent-child relationship is addressed.

### *The Role of Perceptions*

The aim of this study was to identify the inner workings of today's parent-child relationship, which has received limited attention in the literature. It is important to understand both sides of the story, so to speak, as both parents and children have their own ideas and expectancies regarding the intricacies of their relationship. According to Furman, Jones, Buhrmester, and Adler (1989), capturing the perspective of children reveals subjectively important qualities of their relationships.

The term 'perception' is defined by the Oxford dictionary (Barber, 1998) as an interpretation or impression based on one's understanding of something. Identifying parents' and children's perceptions is possible due to their social cognitions, emotions, motives, and behavioural routines in close relationships. Relationship schemas are another pertinent factor, which are knowledge structures acquired as a function of repeated experiences within relationships (Bugental & Happaney, 2000).

Furman et al. (1989) have studied parents' and children's perspectives of sibling relationships and developed a multi-perspective framework that not only looks at sibling relationships in depth, but also other types of close relationships. In this research, children were administered a standardized interview, which was used to identify commonly reported relationship qualities. From this, a 51-item questionnaire was

developed identifying four main factors of the sibling relationship: warmth/closeness, relative status/power, conflict, and rivalry. Further, four dimensions, warmth, egalitarian closeness, power assertion/conflict, and protectiveness, emerged from the parent-child relationship measure. The present study used the abridged version of this measure in order to assess the dyad's relationship quality (Furman & Giberson, 1995).

In the parent-child relationship, Davidov and Grusec (2006) mention that rather than relying on specific socialization strategies, parents and children must be knowledgeable of how their partner will react to different control attempts. The authors further discuss that this understanding would allow parents to tailor their intervention to suit their child in that specific situation. This reasoning may also relate to children, in that, knowing how their parent would respond in a certain situation.

#### *Investigating Power through Conflict*

In order to identify power relations between parents and their children, a specific context must be used in which power may be exerted. Kuczynski (2003) discusses various areas of interaction that bring about power assertion between partners, including conflict, cooperation, child assertion, negotiation, mutual responsiveness, play, and friendship-like qualities. According to Greishaber (2004) "parent-child conflict is about relations of power" (p. 57). Further, previous literature points out that parents controlled conflict and discipline, yet recent research indicates that children play a crucial role in influencing parents in all phases of discipline (Kuczynski, 2003).

In general, social or interpersonal conflict can be defined as a state of resistance or opposition between two individuals (Chaudry, 1995). More specifically, parent-child conflict has been described as a construct related to parenting practices as well as the

dynamics of the dyad's bidirectional relationship (Ostrov & Bishop, 2008). In addition, conflict has been found to help a child develop a better understanding of themselves and others (Chaudry, 1995). Particularly during middle childhood, as children improve their verbal and reasoning skills, engaging in conflict may aid in the development of conflict management skills such as negotiation, compromise, concepts of fairness, and ability to persuade or adopt another person's point of view (Chaudry, 1995).

Perlman et al. (1999) discuss how French and Raven's (1959) bases of power have been used previously to analyze children's conflict interactions with parents and peers. To elaborate, when parents discipline, children can either comply or resist the demand, and it is clear that when there is power assertion, there may be resistance. Further, Kuczynski (2003) states that the most credible evidence depicting the capacity of children's influence has been found during situations of parent-child conflict and parental discipline.

To gain a deeper understanding of the link between conflict and power, Perlman et al. (1999) described the interplay between parent-child conflict and parental discipline. For instance, parents' greater physical strength and control of material resources enable them to use coercive and reward power with their children. Children can also have access to coercive power in parent-child relationships, in their case by using defiance. In terms of expert power, parents possess greater knowledge and expertise, although they are limited to moral and conventional domains but not personal (e.g., food, friends). In this context, conflicts can arise when parents and children disagree about parents' expertise in a certain domain. Positive emotional relationships in relation to referent power between parents and children allow for responsive problem solving and more collaborative

resolutions of conflict. Information power in parent-child relationships is used when parents and children reason with each other in their conflict resolutions. Legitimate power, closely linked to social norms and moral rules, allocates greater power to parents who must serve the needs of their developing children, which simultaneously authorizes children to be in power. For example, when a child does not say thank you when socially relevant, the parent has the legitimate responsibility to apprehend that behaviour, and when a child is hungry and has not eaten all day, but only wants to eat French fries, the parent has the responsibility to feed the child.

In brief, conflict is a clear context to identify power in the parent-child relationship as both members of the dyad derive it from varied sources. One concrete example was described by Greishaber (2001), in which a 5-year-old boy and his mother were playing computer games and constantly challenging each other to occupy a more powerful position. In this case, the parent attempted to use various forms of power to socialize her child and teach him to behave accordingly. Greishaber's (2001) detailed example in her chapter, 'Beating mom: How to win the power game', illustrates that both the parent and child have access to various forms of control that constantly change the balance of power.

### *Areas of Conflict*

Parent-child conflict can arise in personal (e.g., autonomy seeking), moral (e.g., concern for others' welfare), and conventional (e.g., responsibility) domains. Nucci and Smetana (1996) take a closer look at such areas of conflict by identifying mothers' views of children's personal freedom. In this investigation, mothers of children aged five to seven were interviewed using open-ended questions about their concepts of children's

personal freedom, autonomy, and individuality. Results showed that mothers believed that they should be in control of moral, conventional, and prudential topics and that their children were given choice in personal areas. More specifically, mothers reported setting limits on issues of safety, family conventions, and daily routines, whereas children were permitted to make decisions about food, recreational activities, clothes, and friends.

Along the same lines, Kuczynski (2003) mentioned that parents of children aged six to 11 years recalled incidents when their children successfully challenged them in areas of parental personal behaviour, conventional behaviour, health and safety behaviours, and parental attitudes and values. Further, in a pilot study conducted by Greishaber (2004), mothers pointed out conflict-producing events, including bedtime, tidying, toys, clothes, dressing, television viewing, food selection and consumption, and shopping. Consequently, to assess characteristics of power, the present study employed the topics previously documented as events in which conflict is likely to occur in everyday mother-child interactions.

### *The Present Study*

With the understanding of the dynamics of the parent-child relationship and the new outlook on the parent-child dyad from a bidirectional perspective, Kuczynski (2003) argues that future research should focus on identifying how such relationships are formed, maintained, and perceived in everyday life. Hence, the focus of this research was to tap into children's and their mothers' use and perceptions of power in the parent-child relationship during middle childhood. Mothers and their children were the main focus of this research in order to simplify the data collection and analysis. Attaining the dyads'

perspective was crucial to developing a complete picture of the concept of power in today's parent-child relationship.

In order to investigate the use and views of power, interviews were administered to both mothers and their children using hypothetical scenarios. According to Perlman et al. (1999), interviews are most commonly used when studying personal relationships because the participants' responses are thought to represent behaviours. The scenarios given to the dyads were of personal, conventional and prudential conflict situations in which parents and their children would typically assert power. Their responses allowed for an analysis of parents' and children's perspective of power in these three conflict-producing domains.

Along with an interview assessing the amount and types of power used, mothers received the Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (Reitman, Rhode, Hupp, & Altobello, 2002) assessing their parenting style, the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) to rate children's problem behaviours and adaptability as well as the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SD; Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972) to control for social desirability. Both mothers and children were administered the Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire (PCRQ; Furman & Giberson, 1995) assessing their relationship quality.

The hypotheses were as follows:

- (1) Regarding issues of conflict (Greishaber, 2004; Nucci & Smetana, 1996; Wolfe, 1959):
  - a. In the personal domain, the child and mother will rate the child as having more power than the mother.

- b. In the conventional and prudential domains, the mother and child will rate the mother as having more power than the child.

(2) In terms of parenting style and power (Greishaber, 2001, 2004; Lollis & Kuczynski 1997):

- a. Authoritative mothers will allocate a more balanced amount of power in all domains.
- b. Authoritarian mothers will rate themselves as having more power in all domains.
- c. Permissive mothers will allocate more power to their child in all domains.

(3) In relation to the association between perceptions of power and relationship quality (Davidov & Grusec, 2006):

- a. Is there agreement between mothers and children's ratings of the level of power across the different domains of conflict?
- b. In cases where there is high agreement between mothers and children's ratings, it is expected that the quality of the parent-child relationship will be higher.

(4) In regards to power and child outcomes averaged across domains (Bush & Peterson, 2008):

- a. When the balance of power is weighted towards the mother (authoritarian parenting) children will be reported as having more internalizing and externalizing behaviours.

- b. When the balance of power is weighted towards the child (permissive parenting), children will be reported as having more externalizing behaviours.
- c. When the balance of power is more equally weighted, children will be rated as having more adaptive skills.

(5) For types of power used by parents and children both actors will rate:

- a. Mothers as using more coercive power than children
- b. Mothers as using more reward power than children
- c. Mothers as using more information power than children
- d. Mothers as using more negotiation strategies than children
- e. Mothers as using more expert power than children
- f. Mothers and children as using an equal amount of legitimate power
- g. Children as using more sneaky power than mothers
- h. Children as using more referent power than mothers

## Method

### *Participants*

Forty-one mother-child dyads (20 boys, 21 girls) were recruited for this study. Children were between the ages of seven and 12 years ( $M = 10.12$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) distributed fairly evenly (7-year-old,  $n = 1$ ; 8-year-olds,  $n = 5$ ; 9-year-olds,  $n = 8$ ; 10-year-olds,  $n = 9$ ; 11-year-olds,  $n = 11$ ; and 12-year-olds,  $n = 7$ ). Mothers  $M$  age = 42.66 ( $SD = 4.37$ ) and father's  $M$  age = 44.42 ( $SD = 5.72$ ). Twenty-three families had one sibling and 16 had two siblings. Families lived in a large urban (3,000,000), bilingual (French/English) city, with 34% of families speaking mainly English at home, while 46% spoke both English



and French equally. Both parents' backgrounds ranged widely (e.g., Caucasian, European, African American). Families were generally middle class based on parents' years of education after high school (mothers  $M = 6.23$ ,  $SD = 2.57$ ; fathers  $M = 5.08$ ,  $SD = 3.03$ ) and occupation (e.g., teacher, engineer, lawyer).

After attaining ethical approval from the University (see Appendix A), 56 parents who had participated in previous studies conducted in Dr. Nina Howe's Research Lab were sent an information letter offering a movie gift certificate as an incentive for participating (see Appendix B). Recruitment then consisted of a follow up call to answer any questions. Following agreement to participate, appointments were made at a time most convenient for the families. Three families chose to participate at the research lab, while the remaining data collection took place at the family's home. Upon arrival, the details of their participation were re-explained and mothers' written consent (see Appendix C) and their child's verbal consent were attained.

### *Procedure*

The mother and child were interviewed independently. The interview process was explained to the participants and clarifications were made prior to the commencement of the interviews. The process consisted of the researcher reading various conflict situations aloud, followed by open-ended and closed-ended questions. The interviews were recorded using digital audio recorders, in which audio files were easily transferred to a computer for transcribing and coding. In addition, the mother responded to general information questions (see Appendix D), as well as four self-report measures identifying parenting style, relationship quality, child behaviours and social desirability. The child responded to a relationship quality measure analogous to the one administered to the

mother. The order of the interview and questionnaires were counterbalanced to control for any influence of instrument order.

Prior to conducting this research, the data collection process was piloted in order to narrow down four issues per domain of conflict, to refine questions in the interview, and to tweak any imperfections in the wording of the questions and procedure of the data collection.

### *Measures and Coding*

*Conflict scenarios.* The interview was created to meet the needs of this research targeting four issues in three conflict-provoking domains (see Appendix E), including (a) personal (recreation, clothes, friends, and shopping), (b) conventional (politeness/manners, responsibility, chores, and homework), and (c) prudential (food selection, bedtime, appropriate weather wear, and time watching television). The domains of conflict were chosen from previous research (Kuczynski, 2003; Nucci & Smetana, 1996; Smetana & Gaines, 1999), which documented the personal, conventional, and prudential domains as occurring most often in conflicts between mothers and children. These domains were also found to more likely go either way, in terms of either the mother or child resolving the conflict in their favour compared to the other domains of conflict (e.g., moral, safety), which most likely would be resolved in the mothers' favour. The issues of conflict used to represent each domain were retrieved from various sources and identified as the most common issues in everyday parent-child relationships (Collins & Laursen, 1999; Greishaber, 2004; Nucci & Smetana, 1996; Smetana & Gaines, 1999).

*Conflict interview.* After each conflict scenario was read aloud, three open-ended questions targeted how the interviewee and their mother would respond to a situation in

their respective favour, as well as how the conflict would actually be resolved in their family. These questions were designed to gather information on what types of power (i.e., coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, expert, information, and sneaky) were used by partners to steer the resolution of the conflict in their favour and to identify what would essentially occur between the dyad. Subsequently, one closed-ended question targeted the level of power held by either the mother or child by asking which partner in the dyad would have gotten their way in each situation (1 = definitely child, 2 = probably child, 3 = both, 4 = probably mother, 5 = definitely mother). To attain a scale of the balanced amount of power, codes were transformed from definitely mother or child to a score of 1 = low balance, from probably mother or child to a score of 2 = moderate balance, and finally “both” was recoded as 3 = high balance of power. This allowed for a quantitative comparison of the level and balanced amount of power exhibited by each partner in various situations (see Appendix F).

*Interview Coding.* Due to technical difficulty, one parent interview failed to record after a few seconds, therefore, 40 parent interviews and 41 child interviews remained. Each interview ranged on average from 10 to 20 minutes. Each audio-recording was transcribed and then coded by two researchers. Five mother and five child transcripts were coded by both researchers for training purposes. The coding scheme (see Appendix G) was specified as the coders discussed participants’ responses and compared them to the definitions of power types. The negotiation code was added to the coding scheme as many participants indicated an offer to negotiate as a solution to a conflict situation. Once training was complete and the coding scheme was clearly defined, reliability coding was conducted. On 20 percent of the transcripts ( $n = 17$ ) coders reached

84 % agreement overall and over 80% agreement was achieved for each code (coercion = 80%, reward = 80%, legitimate = 80%, referent = 100%, expert = 100%, information = 89%, sneaky = 89%, and negotiate = 87%). Both referent and expert power occurred infrequently, and therefore were not included in the analyses of this study.

*Parental Authority Questionnaire.* The Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (PAQ-R; Reitman et. al., 2002) was administered to assess parenting style (see Appendix H). This was a revised version of Buri's (1991) original measure. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items (10 per parenting style) targeting characteristics of Baumrind's (1971) parenting prototypes: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. For example, an item on the authoritarian subscale is, "When I ask my children to do something, I expect it to be done immediately, without question". Responses were set on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. This measure allowed for a comparison of parenting styles with the level of power used by both mothers and children in various conflict situations.

From the data that were collected, three subscale scores (range 10 - 50) represented the number of times that each mother endorsed the three types of parenting styles. The higher the score, the greater the mothers' reported use of a particular parental style of authority. Reitman et al. (2002) stated that the reliability coefficients for the authoritarian and permissive scales ranged from .72 to .76 and the authoritative scale attained an *alpha* of .77. This provides modest convergent validity for all subscales in the PAQ-R, which was measured against the Parenting Scale (PS; Arnold, O'Leary, Wolff, & Acker, 1993) and the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI; Gerard, 1994).

*Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire.* The Parent-Child Relationship

Questionnaire (PCRQ; Furman & Giberson, 1995) assesses mothers and children's perceptions of their relationship quality. The short version consists of 40 items (see Appendix I), such as, "How much do you and your Mom do nice things for each other?" Items are answered on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = hardly at all to 5 = extremely much; see Appendix J for child visual aid for answering). For the purpose of clarity, minor changes were made to the response category, specifically the fifth point on the Likert scale was modified from 'extremely much' to 'a lot' and the general wording of each statement was also modified from 'your parent' to 'your Mom'.

The items targeted 19 qualities of the parent-child relationship (e.g., affection). Furman and Giberson (1995) indicate that internal consistencies of these subscales were acceptable (*alphas* = .83 to .84 for children's reports; *alphas* = .84 to .85 for mothers' reports). Five factors were derived from the mother's responses, including warmth, personal relationship/closeness, disciplinary warmth, power assertion, and possessiveness. Four factors were derived from child responses including, warmth, egalitarian closeness, power assertion, and protectiveness. The egalitarian factor includes two parent subscales, (a) personal relationship and (b) disciplinary warmth.

*Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition.* The Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004) is a comprehensive tool to assess a variety of problem behaviours, school problems, and adaptive skills (see Appendix K). It includes a child self-report form, as well as parent and teacher reports for preschool children, middle-childhood aged children, and adolescents. Only the parent report (for rating children 6-11 years old) was used due to the population under investigation. Items (total = 160) are rated for how frequently each

behaviour is perceived to occur on a four choice response (N = never, S = sometimes, O = often, A = almost always). Five scales are rated: externalizing problems, internalizing problems, school problems, other problems, and adaptive skills. However, for the purposes of this study, only three of the five subscales were used for analyses (i.e., externalizing problems, internalizing problems, and adaptive skills). The externalizing problems scale is based on ratings of conduct problems (e.g., lies to get out of trouble), hyperactivity (e.g., can't wait to take a turn), and aggression (e.g., seeks revenge on others). The internalizing problems scale is a composite of ratings of anxiety (e.g., worries about making mistakes), depression (e.g., seems lonely), and somatization (e.g., complains of being sick when nothing is wrong). Lastly, the adaptive scale includes items on activities of daily living (e.g., acts in a safe manner), adaptability (e.g., adjusts well to changes in family plans), functional communication (e.g., is able to describe feelings accurately), social skills (e.g., offers help), and leadership (e.g., gives good suggestions for solving problems).

Internal consistency reliability estimates, according to Merrell (2003), are impressive as score coefficients are in the .80 to .90 range. Further, test-retest reliability has been calculated as typically ranging from .70 to .80 (Merrell, 2003).

*Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale.* The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SD; Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972) was administered to the mother in order to control for social desirability bias in their responses (see Appendix L). The MC-SD was developed to measure any bias an individual may have towards affirming social norms. This scale was given to participants in this study in order to evaluate how much each individual was likely to answer questions in a more socially favourable direction. It

consists of 15 statements in which participants were asked to answer as true or false. For example, one item is, "I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake". According to Strahan and Gerbasi (1972), reliability of the scale is supported by "the finding of fairly similar coefficients across samples diverse in subject composition and conditions of questionnaire administration" (p. 192).

## Results

### *Preliminary Analyses*

Prior to testing the hypotheses, data were checked for accuracy of inputting, and analyses were conducted to check for outliers, skewness, and kurtosis. These preliminary tests indicated that the data were normally distributed, with the exception of one outlier with a high score on the BASC-2 scale, which was controlled for by removing the participant's scores for analyses involving this scale. To test for social desirability bias, a Pearson correlation was conducted between the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability (MCSD) scale and all the variables in the dataset. There was only one significant association with authoritative parenting,  $r = .37, p < .05$ . Although this effect is significant, controlling for it in subsequent analyses did not change results, and therefore was not taken into account in the reported findings. As only one variable was associated with social desirability, it appears as though mothers responded truthfully in most of the self-report measures.

Descriptive information for variables assessed for both mothers and children is presented in Table 1, while variables relating to mothers' reports (i.e., MCSD, BASC-2) are presented in Table 2. The subsequent results will be presented first by age and gender effects followed by each hypothesis. All tables and the figure are presented at the end of the results section.

### *Age and Gender Effects*

*Age effects.* Pearson correlations were performed between age of the child at time of testing and all variables in the data-set to check for possible associations due to children's developmental characteristics. A few age effects arise, as shown in Table 3, in



which the child's rating of the level of power in the personal domain as well as the child's rating of the balance of power in personal and prudential domains were positively correlated with the child's age. In subsequent analyses involving these variables, age was first controlled for, however this did not change the degree or direction of the results, therefore analyses are reported without age controlled.

*Gender effects.* Pearson correlations analyzed the effect of gender on all variables in the data set. Findings, presented in Table 3, indicated a relationship between gender and children's adaptive skills as rated by the mother, as well as with children and mothers' reports of relationship quality. *T*-tests show that, according to mothers, girls were reported as having better adaptive skills,  $t(39) = -2.74, p < .01$  ( $M = 52.57, SD = 5.72$ ) than boys ( $M = 48.05, SD = 4.79$ ). In terms of children's reports of relationship quality, girls reported a more positive relationship quality with their mothers than boys,  $t(39) = -3.64, p < .01$  ( $M = 8.82, SD = .51; M = 7.97, SD = .93$ , respectively). Similarly, for mothers' reports of relationship quality,  $t(39) = -2.35, p < .05$ , they rated themselves as having a better relationship with their daughters ( $M = 8.73, SD = .70$ ) than their sons ( $M = 8.23, SD = .65$ ). These gender effects did not influence the pattern of significance for the following analyses when controlled, thus, gender was not considered further.

#### *Hypothesis 1: Power across Domains*

A 3 (domain) X 2 (actor) within-subject Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test this hypothesis (see Table 4), which expected that, the child and mother would rate the child as having more power than the parent in personal conflict situations. Also, in both conventional and prudential conflict situations, it was hypothesized that the mother and child would rate the parent as having more power than the child. These

hypotheses were supported. Results revealed a main effect of domain,  $F(2, 38) = 76.52, p < .001, \eta^2 = .80$ , indicating that in the personal domain, mothers and children rated the child as having more power. In both the conventional and prudential domains, mothers and children rated the mother as having more power (see Figure 1).

An interaction between domain and actor was also found,  $F(2, 38) = 4.36, p < .05, \eta^2 = .19$ . Post-hoc  $t$ -tests indicate that there was a significant difference in power level ratings in the personal domain,  $t(39) = 2.23, p < .05$ , in which mothers rated the child as having more power ( $M = 2.78, SD = .91$ ) than children rated themselves ( $M = 2.37, SD = .87$ ). Results were nonsignificant when comparing mothers' and children's ratings of power in the conventional,  $t(39) = -1.32, p > .05$ , and prudential domain,  $t(39) = 1.60, p > .05$ .

### *Hypothesis 2: Power and Parenting Style*

Pearson correlations were used to test the hypothesis that authoritative parents will allocate a more balanced amount of power in all domains (see Table 5). The correlations between authoritative parenting style and power balance lead to nonsignificant results in all domains.

To test the hypothesis that authoritarian parents would rate themselves as having more power than children in all domains, a series of Pearson correlations were conducted. Specifically, correlations between authoritarian parenting style and level of power assigned by each actor (mother and child) were conducted. In the personal domain, a greater authoritarian parenting style was related to children's appraisal of power towards the mother. In the conventional domain, the more authoritarian the parenting style, the more the child rated the mother as having more power. In the prudential domain, as the

parenting style was reported to be more authoritarian, children rated their mother as having more power and mothers also rated themselves as having more power.

To examine the hypothesis that permissive parents would allocate more power to their child in all domains, Pearson correlations revealed that only in the prudential domain, the more permissive the parenting, the more children rated themselves as having more power than their mothers.

### *Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of Power and Relationship Quality*

Pearson correlations were conducted to determine the level of power agreement between raters (mothers and children). These results showed a significant positive correlation between mothers and children's ratings of power in the prudential domain ( $r = .38, p < .05$ ) and nonsignificant associations between the actors' ratings of power in the personal ( $r = .12, p > .05$ ) and the conventional domain ( $r = .09, p > .05$ ). According to this hypothesis, it was expected that the higher the agreement between mothers and children's ratings of power, the higher the quality of the parent-child relationship. With one significant positive correlation between children and mothers' ratings of power in prudential domain, the second analysis of this hypothesis was completed to explore its relation to relationship quality.

In the second analysis, a sequential multiple regression was conducted with relationship quality as the dependent variable (see Table 6). Both mothers and children rated their relationship quality individually, therefore, separate regression analyses were conducted for each rating of relationship quality. In each regression, step one included mothers and children's standardized ratings of power and step two included the interaction between mothers and children's standardized ratings of power. Results from

these analyses revealed a significant association between agreement of reported levels of power between actors in the personal domain and children's rating of relationship quality. Specifically, the higher the agreement between mothers and children's ratings of power in the personal domain, the greater the child rated the dyads' relationship quality. The remaining regression analyses were nonsignificant.

#### *Hypothesis 4: Power and Child Behaviour Outcomes*

In order to analyze the hypotheses with regard to power and child outcomes across domains, Pearson correlations were conducted (see Table 7). Findings were nonsignificant. Specifically, the expectation that when the balance of power was either weighted towards the parent (authoritarian parenting) or the child (permissive parenting), mothers would report children as having more externalizing behaviours was not supported. Also, the hypothesis stating that when the balance of power was more equally weighted, children will be rated as better adjusted was not supported.

To investigate further, an additional Pearson correlation was conducted between parenting style and child outcome measures (see Table 8). Results indicated a significant association between authoritative parenting and adaptive skills and authoritarian parenting and internalizing behaviours.

#### *Hypothesis 5: Types of Power by Actor*

A 2 (actor) X 6 (type of power) within-subject ANOVA was performed (see Table 9) to assess whether mothers used more coercive, reward, information, and negotiation power than children to achieve their goals. Also, this analysis revealed whether both mothers and children used an equal amount of legitimate power and whether children used more sneaky power than parents to achieve their goals.

Results indicated a main effect of power,  $F(1, 35) = 73.31, p < .001, \eta^2 = .91$ , and actor,  $F(1, 39) = 13.96, p < .01, \eta^2 = .26$ , qualified by an interaction between power and actor,  $F(1, 35) = 32.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = .82$ . Post-hoc pairwise comparisons illustrated that this hypothesis was partially supported. Specifically, as displayed in Figure 2, mothers used more coercive,  $t(39) = -9.42, p < .001$ , and information power,  $t(39) = -4.58, p < .001$ , than children, whereas children used more sneaky power than mothers,  $t(39) = 6.84, p < .001$ . In relation to legitimate power, a trend was found contrary to the prediction, in which children used more of this type of power than mothers,  $t(39) = 1.95, p < .06$ . Comparisons between mothers and children's use of reward,  $t(39) = -.97, p > .05$  and negotiation power,  $t(39) = -1.04, p > .05$  were nonsignificant.

Figure 1. Domain by Actor ANOVA Interaction

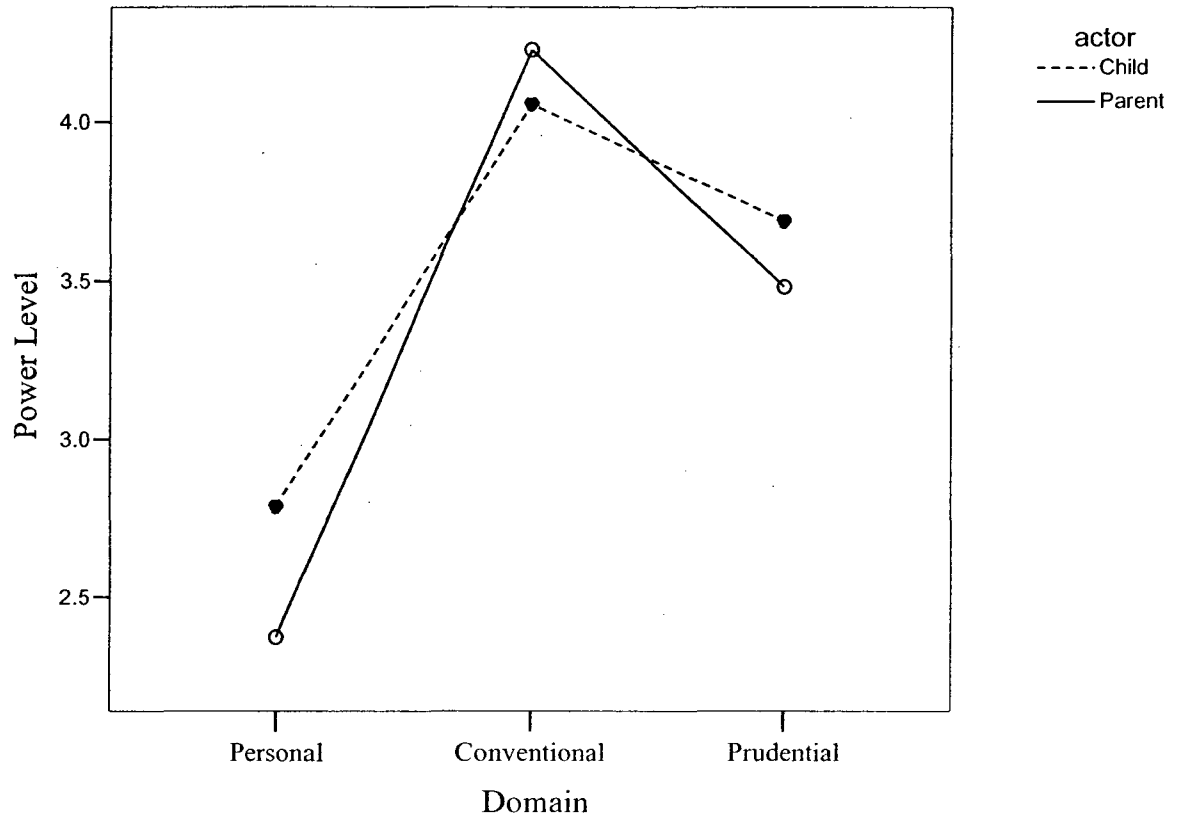


Figure 2. Type of Power by Actor ANOVA Interaction

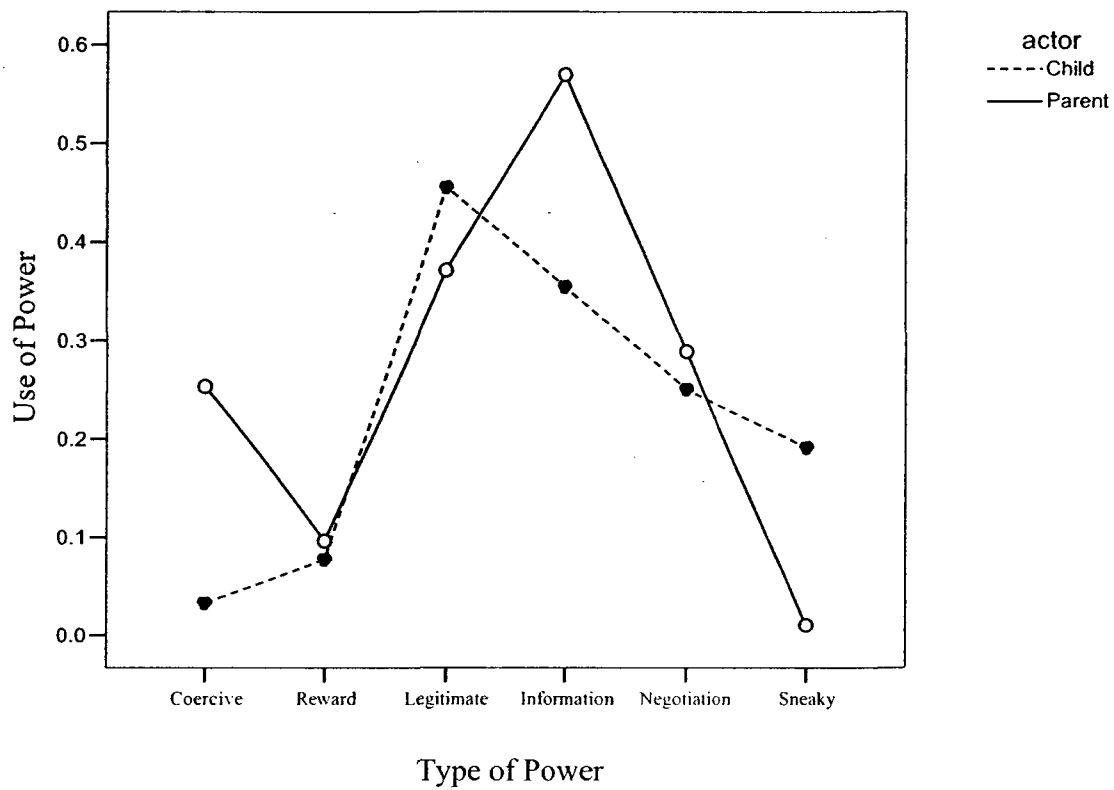


Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for Child and Parent Measures*

Power Domain	Mother		Child	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>
Personal	2.37 (.87)	40	2.78 (.89)	41
Conventional	4.23 (.59)	40	4.05 (.62)	41
Prudential	3.48 (.68)	40	3.69 (.78)	41
<b>Balance of Power</b>				
Personal	1.71 (.38)	40	1.88 (.37)	41
Conventional	1.59 (.38)	40	1.66 (.44)	41
Prudential	1.98 (.52)	40	1.77 (.43)	41
<b>Power Type</b>				
Coercive	.25 (.15)	40	.03 (.07)	41
Reward	.10 (.09)	40	.07 (.12)	41
Legitimate	.37 (.16)	40	.46 (.19)	41
Information	.57 (.21)	40	.36 (.25)	41
Negotiation	.29 (.16)	40	.25 (.19)	41
Sneaky	.01 (.03)	40	.19 (.16)	41
Relationship Quality	8.5 (.71)	41	8.4 (.85)	41

*Note.* Possible range of scores for Power Domain is 1 to 5, Balance of Power is 1 to 3, Type of Power 0 to 1, and Relationship Quality is 1 to 10.



Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Mother Measures*

Parenting Style	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>
Authoritarian	28.39 (5.82)	41
Authoritative	42.27 (4.02)	41
Permissive	23.78 (5.33)	41
<b>BASC Scores</b>		
Externalizing behavior	48.78 (7.44)	41
Internalizing behavior	49.61 (11.04)	41
Adaptive Skills	50.46 (6.67)	41
Social Desirability	8.32 (3.34)	41
Social Desirability		

*Note.* Possible range of scores for Parenting Style is 10 to 50. BASC scores or 20 to 120, and Social Desirability is 0 to 15.

Table 3

*Age and Gender Effects*

	Gender Effects		Age Effects	
	Child	Mother	Child	Mother
<b>BASC Scores</b>				
Externalizing behavior		-.14		-.05
Internalizing behavior		.06		.08
Adaptive		.41**		.11
<b>Parenting Style</b>				
Authoritarian		.01		-.25
Authoritative		.26		-.12
Permissive		.28		.12
Relationship Quality	.50**	.35*	.02	.03
<b>Power Level</b>				
Personal	-.10	-.10	.39*	.09
Conventional	.18	.11	.10	-.16
Prudential	.11	-.06	.15	-.01
<b>Balance of Power</b>				
Personal	-.09	-.81	.50**	-.12
Conventional	.04	-.08	.23	.10
Prudential	.18	.13	.40**	-.24

*Note.* This table includes ratings by the child and mother correlated with age and gender of the child.

Table 4

*Analysis of Variance of Domain of Conflict*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>P</i>
Domain (D)	2	4.23	.18	.02
Actor (A)	1	46.82	.55	.00
D x A	2	78.85	.81	.00

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 5

*Associations between Power and Parenting Style*

Power Level	Parenting style					
	Authoritarian		Authoritative		Permissive	
	Child	Mother	Child	Mother	Child	Mother
Personal	.35*	.13	.15	.01	-.28	-.19
Conventional	.32*	.10	.04	.23	-.18	-.09
Prudential	.40*	.41**	.08	.16	-.46**	-.18
<b>Balance of Power</b>						
Personal						
	.06	.07	-.27	-.06	-.14	-.07
Conventional						
	-.16	-.03	-.02	-.22	.17	.04
Prudential						
	.10	-.05	-.07	-.11	.23	.06

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 6

## Association between Ratings of Relationship Quality and Agreement of Power Rating

	Personal			Conventional			Prudential		
	Mother	Child		Mother	Child		Mother	Child	
Step 1	$R^2 = .01$	$R^2 = .01$	$R^2 = .02$	$R^2 = .05$	$R^2 = .07$	$R^2 = .06$			
Mother's Rating of Power ( $n = 40$ )	$\beta$ -08	$\beta$ -06	$\beta$ .14	$\beta$ .12	$\beta$ .27	$\beta$ .23	$sr$ -06	$sr$ .12	$sr$ .25
Child's Rating of Power ( $n = 41$ )	.09	-04	-02	-02	-07	-2	-04	-19	-07
Step 2	$\Delta R^2 = .07$	$\Delta R^2 = .11$	$\Delta R^2 = .09$	$\Delta R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .05$			
Mother's Rating x Child's Rating	$\beta$ -05	$\beta$ .37*	$\beta$ .31 <sup>†</sup>	$\beta$ .10	$\beta$ -01	$\beta$ -01	$sr$ .33	$sr$ .10	$sr$ -01

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 7

*Associations between Power and BASC Scores*

Power Level	BASC Scores					
	Externalizing		Internalizing		Adaptive	
	Behavior		Behavior		Skills	
	Child	Mother	Child	Mother	Child	Mother
Personal	-.23	.04	-.09	-.09	-.19	.03
Conventional	.09	.13	-.02	-.17	-.17	.02
Prudential	.05	.06	-.30	-.03	-.14	-.02
<b>Balance of Power</b>						
Personal	-.14	.05	.05	-.10	-.15	.02
Conventional	-.14	.01	.02	.17	.10	-.10
Prudential	-.11	.27	.21	-.21	.11	-.10

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 8

*Associations between BASC Scores and Parenting Style*

BASC Scores	Parenting styles		
	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive
Externalizing behavior	.15	-.01	-.03
Internalizing behavior	.36*	.08	.18
Adaptive skills	-.24	.57**	-.02

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 9

*Analysis of Variance for Type of Power*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Power (P)	5	73.31	.91	.00
Actor (A)	1	13.96	.26	.00
P x A	5	32.73	.82	.00

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.



## Discussion

The overall purpose of this study was to identify mothers and children's use and perceptions of power in their relationship. Thus, each section in this chapter is titled with the topic of each hypothesis. Findings are presented in the same order as in the previous results section followed by possible explanations and literature in support of the conclusions. Further, exploratory analyses are discussed with relevant topics. Lastly, limitations, future directions, and implications for parents and parent-child dynamics are presented.

### *Perceptions of Power across Domains*

The first set of questions concerned the issue of maternal and child perceptions of power across different domains, specifically the personal, prudential, and the conventional. This hypothesis stated that with issues of conflict in the personal domain, the child and mother would rate the child as having more power than the parent. Also, in both conventional and prudential conflict situations, the mother and child would rate the parent as having more power than the child. These expected findings were supported and are in line with the literature. They support Perlman et al.'s (1999) statement that both parties in a relationship may have a small amount of power in all domains or one's power may vary across domains and time. Further, these results demonstrate the importance of assessing each partner's perception of power in the dyad. Particularly, in this case where it seems as though mothers and children have a similar understanding of the outcomes of conflict in each domain in terms of who wields the power to influence the outcome.

*Personal domain.* In personal conflict situations, both mothers and children indicated that the child would get their way in the end. This finding is analogous to

previous research, such as Nucci and Weber (1995) who have found that mothers valued the importance of children's freedom of choice over personal issues in order to develop a sense of autonomy. This result also supports previous literature speculating that there may have been a significant change in parental values towards a greater preference for autonomy in children's ability to make their own decisions (Alwin, 1990). Further, Punch (2005) explains that children are active agents with the ability to assert power over adults, as indicated in this domain.

This favouring of autonomy and independent decision making has been found to be related to positive outcomes in the child's development, including intrinsic motivation, greater creativity, higher cognitive flexibility, better conceptual learning, and higher self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Encouraging children to make their own decisions on personal issues, such as choosing a school activity, allows for self-determined motivation to attain personal control over the environment, an important skill for independent behavior required for their later development (Kuczynski, 2003).

*Conventional and prudential domains.* The finding that both mothers and children rated the mother as having more power in both conventional and prudential domains is in accordance with previous literature focusing on other developmental stages. For instance, Smetana and Asquith's (1994) research on adolescent-parent relations found that both parties agreed that parents should have more power when it comes to conventional issues. Further, a research study with younger children (3 to 4 years old), by Nucci and Smetana (1996), reported that mothers believed they should be in control of family conventions and issues of safety (prudential topics). Although these findings relate to different developmental stages, they can be an indication of how parents and children jointly and

independently perceive this issue. Moreover, there are a number of research studies comparing parents' conceptions with young children's and adolescents' conceptions of authority, but a lack research related to the middle childhood. Therefore, the present study adds to the literature by identifying perceptions of power in the parent-child relationship at this stage of development.

According to Berns (1994), particular knowledge, beliefs, customs, and traditions are acquired by members of society. Each culture involves assumptions about the way the world works and beliefs about the way people should act (Berns, 1994). Further, the author discusses that one's culture has indirect effects on parenting attitudes and that universally, parenting goals include physical health and safety, and behaviors that adhere to specific cultural values. In the Western culture, both conventional and prudential areas of socialization are embedded in the hands of the mother. For instance, children need to learn certain social skills (i.e., manners, responsibility) and issues of safety (i.e., healthy eating, sufficient rest) in order to become healthy adults and well-rounded members of Western society. These are not necessarily skills that children will construct themselves via their interactions with the physical or social world, but may require instruction from knowledgeable members of the culture (i.e., mothers). Consequently, the finding that both mothers and children view mothers as having more power in both conventional and prudential domains is in accordance with theoretical lines of culture and societal values of the Western world.

As a final point, with each partner assessing the child as having power in the personal domain and the mother as having more power in both conventional and prudential domains may be an indication of the bidirectional or horizontal features in

parent-child power relations. This is an important characteristic of the parent-child dyad as both partners exercise their power in appropriate situations. As stated by De Mol and Buysse (2008), this reciprocal influence makes both parents and children receptive and vulnerable to each other's influence, facilitating and constraining each other's employment of agency and power.

*Exploratory analyses.* Additional exploratory analyses identified whether mothers and children rated each other as having a similar level of power in each domain. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in power level ratings in the personal domain, in which mothers rated the child as having more power than children rated themselves. In contrast, in the conventional and prudential domains, there were no differences in the child and maternal ratings of power regarding each other and themselves. This finding could be indicative of the child's developmental stage and view of parental authority. Specifically, it has been found in previous research that the difference in parents and children's ratings of influence may differ due to social construction of their roles (De Mol & Buysse, 2008). These authors explain that North American culture may see parents as responsible for controlling child behavior and children are not socially constructed as having influence over their parents. This explanation of parents and children's perspectives in the social setting may be one reason for their difference in ratings of power in the personal domain, in which parents and children reported their influence on each other in a socially accepted fashion. For example, children infrequently rated themselves as definitely getting their way in personal situations, yet parents frequently rated themselves as having more influence in a personal situation.

### *Parenting Style and Power*

The following set of questions addressed the associations between parenting style and different types of power, to assess how parents who employ different approaches to parenting may use power in similar or different ways.

*Authoritative.* The second hypothesis stated that authoritative parenting style would be associated with a more balanced amount of power in all domains. This expectation was not supported. This may have occurred because of the different characteristics of each domain (e.g., personal choice versus safety issues) and the actors' perception of power. Although authoritative parenting style is characterized by a give and take relationship, each domain varied in level of restrictions required for positive child development. For instance, in the prudential domain, it was expected that parents would be rated as having more power due to the child's safety. Further, according to Smetana (1995), authoritative parents appeared to maintain clear boundaries between personal, conventional, and prudential issues. In brief, the nonsignificant findings related to the association between authoritative parenting and balance of power in all domains may be linked to the complexity of power relations across domains in the parent-child relationship.

*Authoritarian.* Authoritarian parenting style was expected to be related to a higher amount of power exerted by the mother in all domains. This was partially supported. In particular, the child rated the mother as having more power in all three domains, but mothers reported themselves as having more power only in the prudential domain. The results of this hypothesis represent the notion that the child viewed the parent as having the upper hand, so to speak, in each domain of conflict. This outcome may be reflective

of the mothers' behaviorist approaches, including power-assertive or coercive forms of hostility, unexplained punitive strategies, and directiveness (Greishaber, 2001).

In terms of the mothers' perspectives, their report that they had the power in prudential situations but not in personal or conventional situations may be related to maternal behavior in protecting their children from harm. Further, mothers may have reported having more power in relation to children's safety and health as they are considered one of children's primary caregivers. These discrepant results imply the importance of assessing both parent and children's perspectives of their relationship as each partner in the dyad may have a different view of the degree of power held in conflict situations.

Although research indicated that children's perspectives of parenting differ significantly from parent self-perspectives (Gaylord, Kitzmann, & Coleman, 2003), there seems to still be a lack of literature identifying the specific differences in children and parents' views of parenting behaviors (Smetana, 1995). Considering there is no specific literature to explain this phenomenon, one possible explanation for the discrepancy in views of parenting behaviors and power level by each actor is that authoritarian parents may not want to seem controlling in the other domains due to social desirability.

Although there were no associations between the mothers' responses on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability measure and the questionnaire items, socially desirable responding may be stronger when the participant is responding to interview questions directly posed by the interviewer compared to answering items on a questionnaire. This is certainly a question for future research.

*Permissive.* The hypothesis stating that permissive parents would allocate more power to their child in all domains was partially supported. In the prudential domain, the more permissive the parenting, the more children rated themselves as having more power than their mothers. This finding seems worrisome as the prudential domain includes situations of safety and health, yet the situations in this research were of minor threat to the child (e.g., wearing a jacket in cold weather, eating vegetables).

The issue pertaining to child perceptions of parenting is also problematic when explaining this finding. Although, a clear reasoning for this result may be that children raised in families with more permissive parenting behavior are allowed to regulate their own activities by avoiding the use of control (Baumrind, 1966). So, for example, this in turn may lead the child to perceive that they have more power in whether to wear a jacket when it is cold outside.

Although there was no significant finding as to what level of power permissive parents perceive to have in each domain, Smetana's (1995) research indicates that permissive parents ignored conventional components of issues and treated them as adolescents' personal choice more than did other parents. In addition, permissive parents were not more lenient than other parents in their judgments of issues pertaining to adolescents' health and safety (e.g., prudential issues). This research is contradictory to the previous finding in the present study that children rated themselves as having more power in this domain and mothers' rating of power in each domain was not associated with permissive parenting.

### *Perceptions of Power and Relationship Quality*

This set of questions addressed the links between maternal and child perceptions of power and the quality of their relationship. It was hypothesized that the higher the agreement between mothers and children's ratings of power, the higher the quality of the parent-child relationship. Results showed that mothers and children did agree on ratings of power, but only in the prudential domain. This agreement may reflect the understanding and importance of safety by both parties in the dyad. When agreement of power ratings in each domain was correlated to mothers' and children's assessment of relationship quality, there was only one significant result. Agreement of reported levels of power between actors in the personal domain was associated with children's rating of relationship quality. The remaining regression analyses were nonsignificant.

These analyses indicate that the more mothers and children agreed on each other's level of power on personal issues, the higher the child rated the dyads' relationship quality. This finding may be supported by parents' and children's clear understanding of power issues in personal matters such as choosing a favorite sweater or a friend as indicated by literature on parental knowledge. Davidov and Grusec (2006) mention that rather than relying on specific socialization strategies, parents must be knowledgeable of how their child will react to different control attempts. The authors further discuss that this understanding would allow parents to tailor their intervention to suit their child in that specific situation. This reasoning may also relate to children, in that, knowing how their parent would respond in a certain situation (e.g., choosing a preferred style of shoe) could aid their reactions and reasoning about which power resources to choose in order to get what they want. Mothers' and children's understanding of their use of power in the



personal domain may indicate that such situations are resolved in a consistent fashion allowing the outcome to be more predictable. This predictability may then be associated with more positive outcomes when conflicts related to personal issues arise and this may be linked to a better relationship quality.

In the other two domains of conflict (conventional and prudential), it seems as though parents and children have differing views or understanding of each other's responses in resolving such issues. Further, it may be that there are more contradictory parent and child reactions to situations related to the conventional and prudential domain than personal issues. These nonsignificant results may also reflect the differing perspectives by each partner in the dyad as to who would have the power in each situation. In addition, each situation could have been an infrequent occurrence in the family, therefore mothers and children were uncertain of the outcome. Future work should ask about the frequency of specific issues within the family to account for possibility that this may have influenced their responses.

#### *Power and Child Behavior Outcomes*

This set of questions investigated how the balance of mother-child power was associated with child behavior outcomes (internalizing, externalizing, adaptive skills) as measured by the BASC. It was expected that when the balance of power was weighted towards the parent (authoritarian parenting), mothers would report the child as having more internalizing and externalizing behaviours. In addition, this hypothesis stated that when the balance of power was weighted towards the child (permissive parenting), mothers would report children as having more externalizing behaviours. Also, when the

balance of power was more equally weighted, children will be rated as better adjusted.

These hypotheses were not supported.

Theoretically, the level of power held by the mother and child in each domain should be indicative of parenting behaviors (Baumrind, 1966). For example, authoritarian parenting style consists of power-assertive tactics, such as coercive hostility and corporal punishment (Greishaber, 2001), which has been associated with problematic behaviors, including internalizing and externalizing behavior (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994). Permissive parenting is characterized by a lack of follow-through and disregard of misbehavior where parents use nonpunitive measures (Baumrind, 1966; Greishaber, 2001). Children living with permissive parents, according to Bush and Peterson (2008), are more likely to associate with deviant peers, have low motivation, and develop externalizing behaviors.

Considering this literature, if the mother had been rated as having more power, the child may be at risk for both internalizing and externalizing behaviors, if the child was rated as having more power, the child could show externalizing behaviors, and finally, if the mother and child held a balanced amount of power, the child would exhibit more adaptive skills. Specifically, power was expected to moderate the relationship between parenting style and certain child outcomes.

These expectations were not supported with this study's participant sample perhaps due to the infrequent high ratings of power towards the parent or child overall. Specifically, the mean rating of power overall was 3.43 (1 = child; 5 = mother), meaning that the power ratings averaged weighted slightly towards the mother. Similarly the mean balance of power overall was 1.77 (1 = least balance; 3 = highest balance), indicating that

there was on average a moderate balance of power in the parent-child relationship.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant findings, may be that the families were mainly from middle class backgrounds, which may have been associated with lower variability in child behaviors and power struggles. Finally, on the three BASC subscales (internalizing, externalizing, adaptive skills) the children scored in the normal range and there was a lack of scores in the clinical range. In fact, only one child was rated as beyond the cut-off score for each behavior assessment (i.e., externalizing and internalizing behaviours, and adaptive skills) and would be considered in the clinical range. Thus, this lack of variability in the sample may have contributed to the difficulty in finding an association between power and child outcomes. Perhaps, this question should be pursued in an at-risk population (e.g., families referred for problems). Another possible solution to attaining a more accurate rating of child behavior would be to assess not only parents' report, but also the teacher's report and self-report of child behaviors in order to attain a more objective rating.

*Exploratory analyses.* Further investigations identified associations between parenting style and child outcome measures. In particular, significant relationships were found between authoritative parenting and adaptive skills and between authoritarian parenting and internalizing behaviours. These results support literature on parenting styles and child outcomes. For instance, Bush and Peterson (2008) report that authoritative parenting style has been linked to desirable psychosocial outcomes in children, such as high levels of self-esteem, social skills, and school performance, similar to the BASC adaptive skills subscales (e.g., functional communication, social skills and leadership). These positive outcomes develop as children learn to be independent, self-

regulate their behavior, and develop a healthy psychological orientation (Berns, 2004).

To explain the association between authoritarian parenting and internalizing child behaviors, Fletcher et al. (2008) state that a greater use of punitive discipline was associated with more externalizing and internalizing problems for children whose parents employed the authoritarian parenting style. Research states that this type of parenting is related to withdrawn behavior indicative of internalizing behavior. This process is hypothesized to occur because children develop little independence and social responsibility, as they are not given a chance to regulate their own behavior (Berns, 2004). These exploratory findings provide some support for the theoretical explanation of this hypothesis. Thus, it appears as though there may be other factors other than the use and perceptions of power involved in the moderation of parenting style and child outcomes. In addition, perhaps a larger sample size and more detailed measure of power would have yielded the expected results.

#### *Types of Power by Actor*

This hypothesis investigated whether mothers used more coercive, reward, information, and negotiation power than children to achieve their goals. Also, the question was addressed of whether both mothers and children used an equal amount of legitimate power and whether children used more sneaky power than parents to achieve their goals. Partial support for this hypothesis was found.

Specifically, results illustrated that mothers used more coercive (e.g., scream, use punishment) and information power (e.g., it's healthy for you, your friends are registered for the school activity you want) than children and children used more sneaky power (e.g., it's my brother's turn, read a book in my bed without my mom knowing) than

mothers. The finding in relation to legitimate power (e.g., I don't like that, I don't need to go to bed) was contrary to the prediction, in which children used this power resource more than mothers. The remaining comparisons related to reward (e.g., parents offering a privilege or children complaining) and negotiation power (e.g., time negotiation, offer of a compromise) were nonsignificant.

These findings corroborate previous literature only in some instances. For example, the foundations of parental power have been said to consist of physical strength, control over material resources (i.e., income, material goods), and expertise, which enables parents to use coercive, reward, negotiation, and information power with their children (Kuczynski, 2003; Perlman et al., 2000). In the present study, mothers used more coercive and information power, as discussed in the literature, but not in terms reward, legitimate, or negotiation power, contrary to previous research. A difference in amount of such power types may not have surfaced as children also have access to these resources to get what they want out of certain conflict situations.

According to Kuczynski (2003), power in the parent-child relationship is an interdependent asymmetry considering both parents and children have resources available to draw upon on different levels. To illustrate, both parties can use each type of power, for example children can use coercive power by defying parental authority, both parents and children have the ability to reason, and both parties have the legitimate "right" to influence the other (Perlman et al., 1999). Therefore, results from this hypothesis allow for a deeper understanding of the type of resources used by each partner in the dyad to attain power over certain situations in everyday family life.

According to Punch (2005), parental legitimate power is linked to their inherent roles as protectors and providers, nurturing children's well-being and it explicitly gives the authority to set rules that children must follow. Further, Perlman et al. (1999) state that historically, parental authority was unquestioned. However, today's Western culture legitimizes children's power with an increase in children's rights (i.e., standards of care, freedom from maltreatment, freedom of self-expression, and norms of companionate parent-child relationships; Punch, 2005). Despite the seemingly equal access to legitimate power, children in this study used it more than mothers to get what they wanted. Although this finding was a trend, it may suggest that children are exercising more power in the parent-child relationship. This speculation requires further study.

Children in the present study used more sneaky power than mothers. Close examination of the children's responses to how they used this power revealed that their intentions may have been to divert attention away from conflict. Recent research supports this view as adolescents' reasons for deceit included avoiding punishments, not wanting to upset their parents, and retaining a sense of autonomy (Perkins & Turiel, 2007). Although participants in this study were of middle childhood age, these reasons for using sneaky power seem valid considering the direct examples from children's responses to the scenarios presented. For example, children responded to doing chores by saying "I'll do it later", to avoid punishment; when asked to put on a jacket when they did not want to, one child stated "I would wear it to school and take it off at recess" perhaps not wanting to upset their parents. According to Perkins and Turiel (2007), children judge acts of deception as acceptable when the truth would result in hurting the feelings of others. In relation to the present study, it appears as though children use deception to steer away

from the negative aspects of conflict, avoiding distress they or their mother may feel during conflict situations.

On a final note in regard to types of power used in the parent-child relationship, Wolfe (1959) states that the more resources one has in their control, the more power one wields. In the present study, mothers used two types of power (coercive and information) more than children, and children also used two types of power (legitimate and sneaky) more than mothers. Consequently, with Wolfe's (1959) theoretical description, it appears as though neither mothers nor children have more power over the other in overall terms, however they do so in specific types of power. Further, the present study's finding that parent-child power relations vary by specific contexts (personal, conventional, and prudential) suggests that the nuanced examination of power held by parents and children was a fruitful endeavor. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that these power resources can be used in any combination by either partner in the dyad to "win" over certain conflicts, which adds another dimension to the complexity of the parent-child relationship (Perlman et al., 1999).

### *Limitations*

In relation to the sample in this study, some limitations arise, including sample size where a greater number and variability (i.e., socioeconomic status, ethnicity) of participants could be beneficial in allowing for greater statistical power to detect significant findings. This sample was also limited by using mothers as the parental figure, where a sample including both parents might have yielded a more dynamic study investigating how male and female children differ in power relations with both their mother and father. In addition, the families were all English speaking and from middle-class backgrounds, thus limiting variability in the sample's characteristics and generalizability of the findings. Further, these participants were recruited from previous studies at Concordia University, which may limit the types of families involved in this study.

There are also limitations present in the use of questionnaires, namely there were some instances in which the participants missed a page, even though before beginning to respond they were told to make sure to look at the pages back-to-back to ensure completion of each questionnaire. This was controlled for by using missing codes in the data set and calculating the averages of the completed responses. In terms of specific self-reports in this study, the Parental Authority Questionnaire -Revised (Reitman et al.,2002) assessing parenting style was limited in that it did not account for the uninvolved parenting style, which has been added to Baumrind's original conceptualization (1971).

Further, when assessing children's perspectives, some issues may be important including: rapidly changing developmental characteristics that may allow for instruments to be applied at one age but not another; lower focusing ability among some children;



participants' sociability and comfort with adults; and children's differing abilities to think in hypothetical situations (Reid et al., 1990). Additionally, any type of reporting of the self in social situations is subject to social desirability bias, where responses may be distorted to meet societal expectations, hence the inclusion of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. However, in the present study, there was no evidence that mothers' responses on the questionnaires were influenced by social desirability. This limitation may affect children's responses as there was no social desirability scale for assessing their possible bias.

The interview used in this study was developed from a compilation of previous research relating to possible conflict situations between parents and their children (Nucci & Smetana, 1996; Smetana & Gaines, 1999; Kuczynski, 2003). Yet, there was no specific indication as to what parents and children in middle childhood specifically argue about most often as many previous research studies revolved around adolescent-parent conflict situations. Therefore, the scenarios chosen in this study may not be directly relevant to the participants and there was no quantitative analysis measuring its relevance. For instance, a few families mentioned that their children know that they are not to chew with their mouth open, therefore this was not a problem, but the interviewer prompted the parent or child and ask them what they would do if it did happen.

Another possible limitation related to the interview is that participants may not have understood the situation in the same way. For example, in some cases, parents interpreted the personal scenario about the child and the mother wanting a different style of shoe as prudential, in that they mentioned what they would do if their child wanted to have a high-heel shoe or a shoe with little grip, but the initial intention was personal

choice of a style of shoe (e.g., color). Furthermore, this may be an indication of the overlap between domains and complexity of issues in the parent-child relationship. Additionally, the scenarios were presented as conflict situations, therefore, although some issues may not have been relevant to families, participants responded as if it was a potential conflict. In order to avoid such a drawback future research can ask parents if they consider a certain situation as a conflict first and then ask what they would do about it. In addition, scenarios also might not have been appropriate for all ages in the group of participants.

In terms of interpretation of the interview responses, Furman et al. (1989) states that simply investigating both verbal reports of mothers' and children's perceptions does not automatically guarantee that they report their actual perceptions. Additionally, some of the younger children (seven or eight years old), did not seem to respond with a wide vocabulary, attributable to their level of development, therefore responses were limited to a few words (e.g., "no", "I don't want to"). Coding these interviews was a challenge for making the distinction between certain types of power, such as information and legitimate power. For instance, if a child stated that they did not want to do their chores because they were tired, this could be interpreted as providing a logical explanation to prove their case or giving a legitimate reason. To overcome such difficulties, many examples were provided to both coders to keep coding style consistent. In the interview, participants were asked who would get their way in each situation and it was found that many children would give percentages, in that it was not always their mother or themselves having all the power in each situation, but varied (e.g., 70: 30). Perhaps then it would have been more accurate to assess a percentage of who would get their own way

in a situation rather than ask participants to pick from the suggested responses (e.g., “probably” or “definitely a partner getting their way”). This may have given a more accurate rating of level and balanced amount of power.

### *Future Directions*

This study provides an overview of the types and perceptions of power used in conflict situations between parents and children in middle childhood. This topic has not been widely researched, especially in this developmental stage. Therefore, many future directions can build the foundations of this topic brick by brick.

Specifically, future studies can look at a sample with a wider range of families of different socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and family characteristics (single-child, multi-child). Also, studies of at-risk families that have been identified for family or child behavior concerns should investigate these current issues. In addition, within families, future studies can compare different power characteristics between siblings, and how each parent acts in power attributes to older versus younger siblings and female versus male siblings.

Considering this study identified the use and perceptions of power of children of limited variability, future research can determine how such issues of power are used and perceived through Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model. Specifically, the study of power can be enhanced by including factors from the microsystem of child and family characteristics (i.e., family system, peer relations) to the exosystem of parents’ education level, occupation, and neighborhood characteristics.

Finally, a more detailed investigation of the present data set may be fruitful. Specifically, future research can examine what types of power are more influential in

each domain and whether the type of power used is related to parenting styles. This dataset can be used to investigate the dyads' perceptions of what types of power they will use in response to conflict situations in greater detail. This can be tested as this data-set includes mothers and children's perceptions of how each partner would respond to specific conflict situations. Once identified this may relate to child behavior outcomes and relationship quality. Additionally, identifying the different perceptions of types of power used across domains may give a clearer understanding of the perceptions of power in the parent-child relationship. Future research may then identify the most effective way to use power while parenting in order to allow for children's optimal development.

#### *Implications for Parenting and Parent-Child Dynamics*

These findings of this research have identified issues of power in the parent-child relationship that will begin to build a strong foundation of literature, which seems to be lacking in this area. This study contributes to the current understanding of child-rearing beliefs and practices during middle childhood. With this information, parents, educators, and social workers may develop a clearer understanding of the uses of power in the parent-child dyad to improve their practices towards helping parents achieve positive outcomes for their children and for the quality of the parent-child relationship. For instance, by using authoritative parenting styles, theoretically related to the balance of power, parents can increase children's adaptive skills associated with good communication, social skills, and leadership (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).

As stated by the present study, it appears as though parents could be more lenient when there are power struggles in the personal domain in order to facilitate children's independent behavior. Yet, when conventional and prudential domains are at hand,

parents may be exercising their power in order to socialize their children to become responsible, healthy individuals. Overall, it is important for parents to take into account their child's perceptions of power in conflict situations to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and behaviors, which may be associated with more positive conflict resolution and increase their relationship quality.

### *Conclusion*

The balance of power in the parent-child relationship, as has been argued by some (e.g., Elkind, 1994), may have shifted from adults to children. However, there has not been much research in support of this argument nor has there been much inquiry into the dyads' perceptions of this construct as it occurs in their relationship. In addition, Perlman et al. (1999) mentioned that understanding how power imbalances influence parent-child conflict presents a challenge for researchers.

Therefore, this research may be the beginning of a larger investigation on the topic of power in the parent-child relationship. Hopefully future studies will develop with more rigorous research methodologies delving deeper into the issue of power in family relationships as well as how this may affect child development outcomes and relationship quality.

In addition, De Mol and Buysse (2008) indicate the importance of studying the perceptions of both parents and children in the dyads as this bidirectional-reciprocal relationship cannot be understood when partners are treated as distinct individuals. Further, the authors state there is limited research related to children's reports about their own experiences. Therefore, the present study has important implications for understanding perceptions of power from both sides of the parent-child relationship,

leading to a greater understanding of children and parents as equal agents in the relationship.

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Appendix A  
Ethical approval



Department of Education  
LB-579  
Sir George Williams Campus

**To:** Sandra Della Porta

**From:** Richard Schmid, Chair

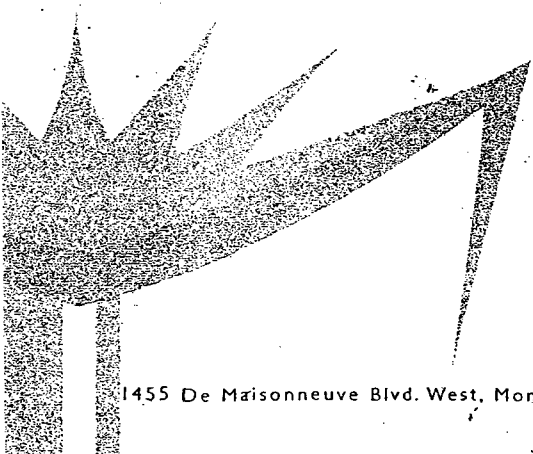
**Date:** January 7, 2009

**Re.:** *Identifying Mothers' and Children's Use and Perceptions of Power in their Relationship*

This letter is to inform you that your proposal had successfully passed the scrutiny of the Department's Ethics Committee and has been accepted.

We take this opportunity to wish you every success with this project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Richard Schmid', written over a horizontal line.



Appendix B  
Information Letter



January 2nd, 2009

## Parent-Child Conflict Study

Coordinated by:  
Sandra Della Porta, M.A. Child Study Candidate

Supervised by:  
Dr. Nina Howe & Dr. Holly Recchia

Dear Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

As you have previously participated in our research, we would like to inform you of a new project underway in Dr. Howe's research lab, the Parent-Child Conflict Study. The purpose of this research is to identify how mothers and children in middle childhood (ages 7 -11) view and report disagreements in their everyday lives, such as chores, bedtime, or a time limit for watching television. This information will provide valuable insights into current parent-child relationships and offer suggestions for future research in this area.

Therefore, we are writing to ask if you and \_\_\_\_\_ would be interested in participating. We would like to gather information from you and your child by conducting a short interview and administering some questionnaires about how you might solve these disagreements and what your views are about parenting. The interview will be conducted individually and audio-recorded for later coding purposes. As for the questionnaires, we will ask your child to complete one questionnaire about your relationship. We will also ask you to complete four short questionnaires related to general information, your relationship, parenting, and your child's behaviour. We expect the entire session to last no longer than an hour and as compensation for your time, you and your child will receive a movie gift certificate.

We will be contacting you by phone in about one week from the receipt of this letter to see if you are interested in participating.

If you are interested in taking part in this study we will come to your home or another comfortable location (such as the university) at a time of your convenience.

Thank you!



If you have any questions pertaining to our study please contact us at: 514-848-2424 ext. 2008 or by e-mail:

Sandra Della Porta at: [sandra.dellaporta@education.concordia.ca](mailto:sandra.dellaporta@education.concordia.ca)

Dr. Holly Recchia at: [hrecchia@gmail.com](mailto:hrecchia@gmail.com)

Dr. Nina Howe at: [nina.howe@education.concordia.ca](mailto:nina.howe@education.concordia.ca)

Appendix C

Consent Form



**CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN:  
Resolving conflicts in the parent-child relationship**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Sandra Della Porta of the Department of Education of Concordia University for a Master's degree under the direction of Dr. Nina Howe.

**A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of this research is:  
To investigate parents' and children's ways of resolving everyday conflicts in their relationship. This information gathered from this project will build on existing literature on parent-child relationships and contribute to the current understanding of child-rearing beliefs and practices in middle childhood.

**B. PROCEDURES**

*I have been informed that the procedure is the following:*

Parents and children will be administered an interview consisting of 12 conflict scenarios followed by open-ended and closed-ended questions identifying types and different ways of resolving conflicts in the parent-child relationship. The interview will be conducted individually and audio recorded for later coding purposes. Further, parents will be asked to complete four questionnaires and children to answer one short questionnaire. These measures will investigate parenting style and how well children and parents get along.

**C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation or that of my child at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e. the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity). All the information that all the participants share is also confidential and private.

I understand that the data from this study may be published, but only group findings will be reported. No identifying information will be included in publications.

**If for any reason you would like your information to be removed from the study, please contact either:**

Sandra Della Porta (Master's Student) at: [sandra.dellaporta@education.concordia.ca](mailto:sandra.dellaporta@education.concordia.ca)

Dr. Nina Howe (Supervisor) at: [nina.howe@education.concordia.ca](mailto:nina.howe@education.concordia.ca)

Dr. Richard Schmid (Department Chair) at: [schmid@education.concordia.ca](mailto:schmid@education.concordia.ca)

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print)

---

SIGNATURE

---

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at 514-848-2424 ext. 7481 or by e-mail at [areid@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:areid@alcor.concordia.ca).

Appendix D

General Information Questionnaire

ID# \_\_\_\_\_

## GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth (d/m/yr) \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_ Boy \_\_\_

Are there other children in the family? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If yes, please indicate if boy(s) or girl(s) and ages (d/m/yr).

---



---



---

Please list any other family members living in your home (e.g., stepsiblings, grandparents, etc.):

---



---



---

What language(s) do you speak?

 English \_\_\_\_\_  
 French \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What language(s) do your children speak at home?

 English \_\_\_\_\_  
 French \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother:

 Biological Mother     Stepmother     Adoptive Mother

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Background \_\_\_\_\_

Born in Canada     Yes     No: Number of years in Canada \_\_\_\_\_

Education:

Years of Education after High School (including C.E.G.E.P): \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree of Education: \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital Status:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married to child's father | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced/separated        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single                    | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remarried                 |  |

**Father:**

- Biological Father     Stepfather     Adoptive Father

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Job Description \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Background \_\_\_\_\_

Born in Canada     Yes     No: Number of years in Canada \_\_\_\_\_**Education:**

Years of Education after High School (including C.E.G.E.P): \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree of Education: \_\_\_\_\_

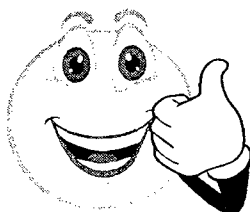
**Marital Status:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married to child's mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced/separated        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single                    | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remarried                 |  |

**Are you interested in being contacted about future research studies?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for answering these questions!**

Appendix E  
Interview Scenarios



## Interview Scenarios

(Child)

### Personal

#### Recreation:

You are really interested in participating in an activity during lunch time at school, but your Mom wants you to sign up for something else.

#### Clothes:

One day, you decide to wear your favourite sweater to school, but your Mom wants you to wear something else.

#### Friends:

You made a new friend at school, but your Mom does not want you to hang out with this person.

#### Shopping:

You go shopping with your Mom to buy new shoes and you really want a particular pair, but your Mom wants you to get another style of shoe.

### Conventional

#### Politeness/Manners:

You are at the dinner table chewing your food with your mouth open and your Mom asks you to stop, but you don't want to stop.

#### Responsibility:

It is your responsibility to keep your room clean and your Mom notices that it is a mess, but you don't want to clean it up.

#### Chores:

Your Mom reminds you that it is your turn to do your chores around the house, but you really don't want to do them.

#### Homework:

Your Mom tells you that it is time to do your homework, but you really don't want to do it.

### Prudential

#### Food selection:

It is time to eat dinner one night and you don't like the vegetables, but your Mom wants you to eat them.

**Bedtime:**

It is past your bedtime and you really don't want to go to bed, but your Mom wants you to go to sleep.

**Appropriate weather-wear:**

It is the beginning of Fall and the weather is getting a little cold outside. On that day, you don't want to wear a jacket, but your Mom wants you to wear one.

**Hours of screen time:**

It's a sunny day and you are enjoying watching television, but your Mom wants you to go play outside.

## Interview Scenarios

(Parent)

### Personal

#### Recreation:

\_\_\_\_\_ is really interested in participating in a particular activity during lunch time at school, but you want him/her to sign up for something else.

#### Clothes:

One day, \_\_\_\_\_ decides to wear his/her favourite sweater to school, but you want him/her to wear something else.

#### Friends:

\_\_\_\_\_ made a new friend at school, but you don't want him/her to hang out with this person.

#### Shopping:

You go shopping with \_\_\_\_\_ to buy new shoes and s/he really wants a particular pair, but you want him/her to get another style of shoe.

### Conventional

#### Politeness/Manners:

You are at the dinner table and \_\_\_\_\_ is chewing food with his/her mouth open and you ask him/her to stop, but \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't want to stop.

#### Responsibility:

It is \_\_\_\_\_'s responsibility to keep his/her room clean and you notice that it is a mess, but s/he doesn't want to clean it up.

#### Chores:

You remind \_\_\_\_\_ that it is his/her turn to do his/her chores around the house, but s/he really doesn't want to do them.

#### Homework:

You tell \_\_\_\_\_ that it is time to do his/her homework, but s/he really doesn't want to do it.

### Prudential

#### Food selection:

It is time to eat dinner one night, but \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't like the vegetables, but you want him/her to eat them.

Bedtime:

It is past \_\_\_\_\_'s bedtime and s/he really doesn't want to go to bed, but you want him/her to go to sleep.

Appropriate weather-wear:

It is the beginning of Fall and the weather is getting a little cold outside. On that day, \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't want to wear a jacket, but you want him/her to wear one.

Hours of screen time:

It is a sunny day and \_\_\_\_\_ is enjoying watching television, but you want him/her to go play outside.

Appendix F  
Conflict Interview

Parent-Child Issues Interview Protocol  
(Child Version)

During the interview, I will read you some scenarios that might result in some disagreements between you and your mom. Following each situation, I will ask you what could happen and what would actually happen in your family. After, I will ask you to tell me if you will get your own way and if your mom will get her way.

Example:

Scenario

You're in your room listening to loud music and your parent asks you to turn it down, but you really don't want to.

Part A

1. What could say or do in this situation to get what you want?
2. What could your Mom say or do in this situation to get what s/he wants?
3. What would actually happen in this situation?

Part B

1. Who would get their own way in the end?

You

Probably     Definitely

Your Mom

Probably     Definitely

Both

Parent-Child Issues Interview Protocol  
(Parent Version)

During the interview, I will read you some scenarios that might result in some disagreements between you and your child. Following each scenario, I will ask you what might happen under certain situations and what would actually happen in your family. Afterwards, I will ask you to rate how likely it is that you will get what you want and how likely it is that your child will get what they want.

Example:

Scenario

You're in your room listening to loud music and your parent asks you to turn it down, but you really don't want to.

Part A

1. What could say or do in this situation to get what you want?
2. What could your child say or do in this situation to get what s/he wants?
3. What would actually happen in this situation?

Part B

1. Who would get their own way in the end?

You

Probably     Definitely

Your Mom

Probably     Definitely

Both

Appendix G  
Interview Coding Scheme



## Interview Coding Scheme

The following codes were to be used for both parent and child responses to open ended questions following the 12 scenarios. Once a type of power was identified, it was calculated as one instance of power use per type. There can be many types of power used in each scenario.

### Coercive power (C)

- Positive punishment
  - Smack-yelling if don't do what they want
- Negative punishment
  - Removing something you want (Take away privileges/consequences). Person enforces punishment (e.g., if you don't do what you are told there will be consequences).
- Aggressive demands meant to instil fear (e.g., GET OUT!)-Has to be clearly coercive not just direct.
- Recipient expects that s/he will be punished if they fail to conform to requests (e.g., I don't want to get in trouble).

*Examples:*

Parent: Scream or yell. If she doesn't stop I would ask her to leave the table. It's now or never. This is it, this is the time and that's it. No computer or TV until it's done. If C didn't want to do their homework I would let them face the consequences at school. Wait until I tell your father gets home.

Child: I will get mad at her. I would have a fit. Stomping around.

### Reward Power (Rw)

- Positive reinforcement
  - e.g., verbal praise, offer of material goods, allocation of time and space or other household resources. Positive affect (e.g., hug)
- Negative reinforcement
  - e.g., begging, stopping to hassle child once chores are done

*Examples:*

Parent: Offer a privilege. If you do your homework now you can play computer later. Annoyed. Nag or repetitive demands (fix it, fix it, fix it-do this, do that...)

Child: Complain. Beg, break parent down. Insist. Can I please please watch it. Eye rolling. "Uhhhhh" exasperated. I'd kind of like bribe her. I'd say get me this pair of shoes, and I'll clean the living room.

### Legitimate Power (L)

- Anything related to autonomy
- Preferences (I like it or I want it)
- Perception that a source has the right to influence them and therefore ought to comply (e.g., I have to listen to her because she is my Mom).
- Reference to inherent role

- Parents as protectors and providers, nurturing children's well-being (e.g., it is my role to raise my child).
- Children's rights, such as standards of care, right to education, freedom from maltreatment, freedom of self-expression, and norms of companionate parent-child relationships (e.g., I am a person too; Punch, 2005).
  - Reference to the right of the social organization of their group or society involving hierarchy (e.g., I am in charge).
  - Not legitimate: You should at least try the vegetables (negotiation)

*Examples:*

Parent: I want you to eat it, I don't want to have to make supper later or see you eating cereal. No/ That's not happening. It's not appropriate. You must wear a jacket. You have to finish your homework. That's enough tv, go outside (very direct). She has to sit down and do it. That's enough tv. They're nicer-maybe they are your style after all. I don't want to hear you complaining. I don't care.

Child: I don't like it. No. I don't want to do that activity, I want to do the other one. I don't feel it's cold. It's my favorite sweater. I'm in grade four and I know what I like. I'm not cleaning it. They're my friends and I get to choose who I want to play with. I hate homework. I don't need to go to bed yet. I don't care. Continue chewing with my mouth open. Laugh. I'm going to be fine. I'm gonna stay up all night! (Doing what you want).

**Referent Power (RF)**

- Identification with a specific person.
  - Wants to maintain a relationship with that individual, therefore, complies (e.g., I don't want to hurt my Mom's feelings).
- Points out similarities with partner (e.g., both my Mom and I like to watch television).

*Examples:*

Parent: None found

Child: You don't care about me. You don't love me. Why do you like Myles more than you like me? How come he doesn't have to...

**Expert Power (E)**

- Uses explicit superior/specialized knowledge or ability.
- B's explicit perception that A possesses knowledge or expertise in a designated area. Or A indicating explicitly that they have greater expertise. (e.g., I know better than you).

○

*Examples:*

Parent: It's still fall, I've been alive a lot more falls than you and I know it gets cold sometimes.

Child: None found

**Information Power (I)**

- Actually know something, not just indicating you are an expert but using actually information to prove your case.

- Saying what you actually know, giving a reason (e.g., argue my points)
- Types of info: Facts, morality, customs, social or prudential.
- A's potential to influence B because of the judged relevance of the information contained in A's message. Informational power accrues to A through A's providing B with a logical explanation or new information favoring change. Often in the literature informational power is subsumed under expert power.
- Rational, persuasive

*Examples:*

Parent: I think it's really cold. Get it over with, it's healthy for you. It has to be done now because then we can do something else after. I'd probably remind C we all have to do a little bit, remind C what I've done day-to-day: I've made your bed, I did this and that, this is what you have to do, this is your responsibility. I would encourage C to talk to some of C's other friends or suggest that C stay close to some of C's other friends? Try to get the child excited about the activity. Explain, say why, if you try it you might like it, it's colder than you think, it's not good manners, you have to get up early or you'll be tired in the morning. You'll be hungry afterwards, the faster you clean up the faster you could play after, give benefits of an activity, reasons why I thought it would be better. I might point out why I didn't think this child was the nicest or best type of friend, give the benefits of the activity. I would remind C how difficult it is to get up in the morning. It's not good for your back. giving some advice. Remind C if C puts things away regularly it won't get so messy. I have to clean the whole house and all you have to do is like this tiny winy little bit. Your friends are signing up for that activity. You will be happier in that activity. I'd probably invite the friend over just to see how they interact (a way to gather information).

Child: If you buy them for me I'm not gonna wear them so it's just a waste of money? No one else is wearing their jackets at school. It's funner to eat with your mouth open. C to M: You're wrong, you don't know my friend. My friends get to stay up later. Argue their point and share their feelings. Why, explain ("I don't need it, I'm not cold, it's not that bad out"), my friend is not that bad, my friend is nice. It's not that messy. Why can't I wear this? I'm tired. I think black is nicer.

*Note:* When the participant indicates a reason for not wanting something or wanting something, this is coded as information power considering the "want" is a response to the scenarios given. Also when the actor indicates specifically what they want or state that they would explain to the recipient what they want (e.g., I would explain to my mom what I want).

Differentiation between Expert and Information Power:

In both cases, B thinks, "I will do as A suggests because that is the best way to deal with this problem." But there is also an important distinction: With expert power, B thinks, "I don't really understand exactly why, but A really knows this topic so A must be right." With informational power, B's thinking is, "Yes, I listened carefully to A and I can now see for myself that this is clearly the best way to deal with the problem."

**Compromise/Negotiation (N)**

- Negotiating would indicate a lack of power struggle:

***Examples:***

**Parent:** Can take jacket with them just incase (meeting in the middle). But I usually just say, at the end of the show cuz I find it's unfair to say right now you must turn it off. I would probably look at the clock and give C a time. Time negotiation (10 minutes play then homework). Should at least try the vegetables. See if there's anything else I could do, like put cheese on them to make them more appealing. Offer of compromise (e.g., I would listen to C). Flip a coin (coin as mediator).

**Child:** Ask a question: Can I do it later? Can I have a few more minutes? Do the activity later and my activity first? I'll wear that sweater tomorrow and my clothes today. Ask for help to clean room from the mom so it will go faster – and mother then would offer help. Can I finish this program?

**Subversive or “Sneaky” Power (S) (Smetana):**

- Using deception to get what one wants

***Examples:***

**Parent:** I'd find ways to pull C away and bring C to activities here or at home. She would just constantly tell me about it and tell me things that would be interesting about it, some of them would be lies, some of them would be true.

**Child:** I'll do it later. Stall. Delay. Put the vegetables in my mouth, go to the bathroom and spit it out without mom knowing. Even if it is messy I would say that it isn't. Well sometimes even if we put C up with a book C'll come down and say, "Oh I heard a noise...", you know reasons to come and see us. If I am going to school, I would probably wear it to school and take it off at recess. C would eat everything else on Cs plate and leave that one vegetable. C usually asks C's (sibling) to do it for C. I wouldn't encourage a play date. Last week I did it, now it's sibling's turn (Also, info).

**Not Applicable:**

- When the child or parent indicates that a scenario is not relevant, is not a 'big deal'/not that important or it does not occur. In many cases for scenario with chewing food with mouth open, the child stops because they know it is wrong- or just stop right away. Not negotiate or power assertion
- When this code is used, there should not be any other type of power used.
- When interviewer uses leading prompt (e.g., [if you think it's hot outside and you really don't want to wear one, what would you tell your mom?] "It's hot outside and I don't want to wear a jacket."

***Examples:***

**Parent:** “Shoes are not all that important unless it was super expensive, then she definitely wouldn't get her way. [So it's not a big issues?]. No not really.” That doesn't really bother me. My husband deals with this not me.

**Child:** I don't know how to answer that because it doesn't really happen.

*Note:* When actor mentions it is only a problem when guests are coming over it is not coded as N/A seeing as the scenario reflects the parent's want for the room to be cleaned.

Appendix H

Parental Authority Questionnaire-Revised (Reitman et. al., 2002)

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

## PAQ-R

Instructions: For each statement below check the box that best describes your beliefs about parenting your child. There are no right or wrong answers. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. In the right column, please put a CHECK MARK for your answer for each item: SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neither Agree or Disagree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

	S A	A	N	D	S D
1. In a well-run home children should have their way as often as parents do.					
2. It is for my children's own good to require them to do what I think is right, even if they don't agree .					
3. When I ask my children to do something, I expect it to be done immediately without questions.					
4. Once family rules have been made, I discuss the reasons for the rules with my children.					
5. I always encourage discussion when my children feel family rules and restrictions are unfair.					
6. Children need to be free to make their own decisions about activities, even if this disagrees with what a parent might want to do.					
7. I do not allow my children to question the decisions I make.					
8. I direct the activities and decisions of my children by talking with them and using rewards and punishments.					
9. Other parents should use more force to get their children to behave.					
10. My children do not need to obey rules simply because people in authority have told them to.					
11. My children know what I expect from them, but feel free to talk with me if they feel my expectations are unfair.					
12. Smart parents should teach their children early exactly who is the boss in the family.					
13. I usually don't set firm guidelines for my children's behavior.					
14. Most of the time I do what my children want when making family decisions.					
15. I tell my children what they should do, but I explain why I want them to do it.					

ID # \_\_\_\_\_

	S A	A	N	D	S D
16. I get very upset if my children try to disagree with me.					
17. Most problems in society would be solved if parents would let their children choose their activities, make their own decisions, and follow their own desires when growing up.					
18. I let my children know what behavior is expected and if they don't follow the rules they get punished.					
19. I allow my children to decide most things for themselves without a lot of help from me.					
20. I listen to my children when making decisions, but I do not decide something simply because my children want it.					
21. I do not think of myself as responsible for telling my children what to do.					
22. I have clear standards of behavior for my children, but I am willing to change these standards to meet the needs of the child.					
23. I expect my children to follow my directions, but I am always willing to listen to their concerns and discuss the rules with them.					
24. I allow my children to form their own opinions about family matters and let them make their own decisions about those matters.					
25. Most problems in society could be solved if parents were stricter when their children disobey.					
26. I often tell my children exactly what I want them to do and how I expect them to do it.					
27. I set firm guidelines for my children but am understanding when they disagree with me.					
28. I do not direct the behaviors, activities or desires of my children.					
29. My children know what I expect of them and do what is asked simply out of respect of my authority.					
30. If I make a decision that hurts my children, I am willing to admit that I made a mistake.					

Appendix I

Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire (Furman & Giberson, 1995)



ID # \_\_\_\_\_

PCRQ (Child Version)

Instructions: For each statement below check the box that best describes the relationship between you and your parent. There are no right or wrong answers. In the right column, please put a CHECK MARK for your answer for each item.

	Hardly at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very Much	A lot
1. How much does your Mom want you to spend most of your time with her?					
2. How much does your Mom not let you go places because she is afraid something will happen to you?					
3. How much do you and your Mom care about each other?					
4. How much do you and your Mom disagree and quarrel with each other?					
5. How much do you and your Mom do nice things for each other?					
6. How much do you and your Mom like the same things?					
7. How much does your Mom praise and compliment you?					
8. How much does your Mom order you around?					
9. How much do you and your Mom tell each other everything?					
10. How much does your Mom spank you when you misbehave?					
11. How much do you admire and respect your Mom?					
12. How much does your Mom admire and respect you?					
13. How much does your Mom take away your privileges when you misbehave?					
14. How much does your Mom show you how to do things that you don't know how to do?					
15. How much does your Mom yell at you for being bad?					

	Hardly at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very Much	A lot
16. How much does your Mom ask you for your opinion on things?					
17. How much do you and your Mom go places and do things together?					
18. How much does your Mom make you feel ashamed or guilty for not doing what you are supposed to?					
19. How much does your Mom talk to you about why you're being punished or not allowed to do something?					
20. How much does your Mom want you to do things with him or her rather than with other people?					
21. How much does your Mom not let you do something you want to do because she is afraid you might get hurt?					
22. How much do you and your Mom love each other?					
23. How much do you and your Mom get mad at and get in arguments with each other?					
24. How much do you and your Mom give each other a hand with things?					
25. How much do you and your Mom have things in common?					
26. How much does your Mom tell you that you did a good job?					
27. How much does your Mom tell you what to do?					
28. How much do you and your Mom share secrets and private feelings with each other?					
29. How much does your Mom hit you when you've been bad?					
30. How much do you feel proud of your Mom?					
31. How much does your Mom feel proud of you?					
32. How much does your Mom forbid you to do something you really like to do when you've been bad?					
33. How much does your Mom help you with things you can't do by yourself?					

	Hardly at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very Much	A lot
34. How much does your Mom nag or bug you to do things?					
35. How much does your Mom listen to your ideas before making a decision?					
36. How much do you play around and have fun with your Mom?					
37. How much does your Mom make you feel bad about yourself when you misbehave?					
38. How much does your Mom give you reasons for rules he or she makes for you to follow?					
39. How much does your Mom want you to be around her all of the time?					
40. How much does your Mom worry about you when you're not home?					

## PCRQ (Parent Version)

Instructions: For each statement below check the box that best describes the relationship between you and your child. There are no right or wrong answers. In the right column, please put a CHECK MARK for your answer for each item.

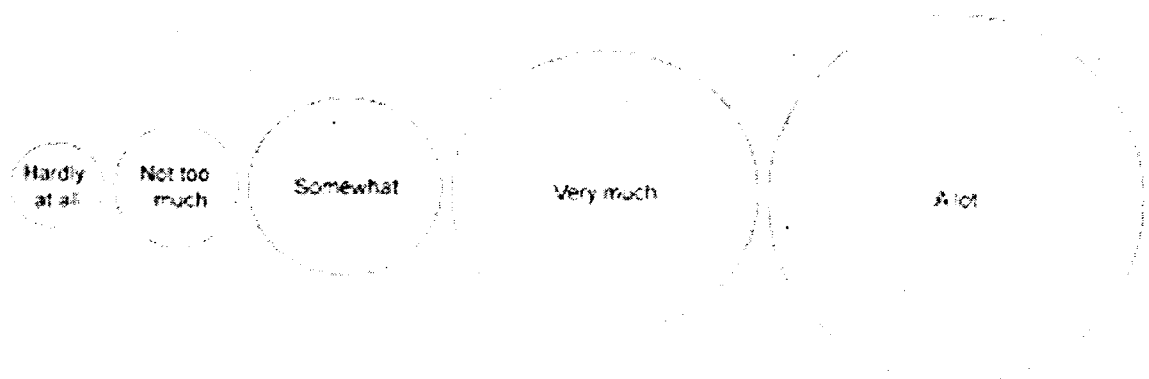
	Hardly at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very Much	A lot
1. How much do you want your child to spend most of their time with you?					
2. How much do you not let your child go places because you are afraid something will happen to them?					
3. How much do you and your child care about each other?					
4. How much do you and your child disagree and quarrel with each other?					
5. How much do you and your child do nice things for each other?					
6. How much do you and your child like the same things?					
7. How much do you praise and compliment your child?					
8. How much do you order your child around?					
9. How much do you and your child tell each other everything?					
10. How much do you spank your child when s/he misbehaves?					
11. How much do you admire and respect your child?					
12. How much does your child admire and respect you?					
13. How much do you take away your child's privileges when s/he misbehaves?					
14. How much do you show your child how to do things that s/he doesn't know how to do?					
15. How much do you yell at your child for being bad?					

	Hardly at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very Much	A lot
16. How much do you ask your child for their opinion on things?					
17. How much do you and your child go places and do things together?					
18. How much do you make your child feel ashamed or guilty for not doing what s/he is supposed to?					
19. How much do you talk to your child about why s/he is being punished or not allowed to do something?					
20. How much do you want your child to do things with you rather than with other people?					
21. How much do you not let your child do something s/he wants to do because you're afraid s/he might get hurt?					
22. How much do you and your child love each other?					
23. How much do you and your child get mad at and get in arguments with each other?					
24. How much do you and your child give each other a hand with things?					
25. How much do you and your child have things in common?					
26. How much do you tell your child that they did a good job?					
27. How much do you tell your child what to do?					
28. How much do you and your child share secrets and private feelings with each other?					
29. How much do you hit your child when they've been bad?					
30. How much do you feel proud of your child?					
31. How much does your child feel proud of you?					
32. How much do you forbid your child to do something s/he really likes to do when s/he has been bad?					
33. How much do you help your child with things they can't do by themselves?					

	Hardly at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very Much	A lot
34. How much do you nag or bug your child to do things?					
35. How much do you listen to your child's ideas before making a decision?					
36. How much do you play around and have fun with your child?					
37. How much do you make your child feel bad about themselves when s/he misbehaves?					
38. How much do you give your child reasons for rules you make for s/he to follow?					
39. How much do you want your child to be around you all of the time?					
40. How much do you worry about your child when s/he is not home?					

Appendix J

Visual Aid: Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire





## Appendix K

Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC-2; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004)

Parent Rating Scales—  
Child  
Computer-Entry Form

PRS-C  
Ages  
6-11

# BASC-2

## Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition

Cecil R. Reynolds and Randy W. Kamphaus

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Month Day Year Month Day Year

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:  Female  Male

Relationship to Child:  Mother  Father  
 Guardian  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Other Data: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions:

On the pages that follow are phrases that describe how children may act. Please read each phrase, and mark the response that describes how this child has behaved recently in the last several months:

Circle **N** if the behavior **never** occurs.

Circle **S** if the behavior **sometimes** occurs.

Circle **O** if the behavior **often** occurs.

Circle **A** if the behavior **almost always** occurs.

**Please mark every item.** If you don't know or are unsure of your response to an item, give your best estimate.

### How to Mark Your Responses

Be certain to **circle** completely the letter you choose, like this:

N (S) O A

If you wish to change a response, mark an X through it, and circle your new choice, like this:

N (X) (O) A

Before starting, be sure to complete the information in the boxes above these instructions.



Product Number  
10014

PRS-C-1.0-11

1

Remember: N – Never    S – Sometimes    O – Often    A – Almost always

- |  |         |   |         |
|--|---------|---|---------|
| 1. Shares toys or possessions with other children. ....          | N S O A | 42. Says, "Nobody understands me." ....                       | N S O A |
| 2. Eats too much. ....   | N S O A | 43. Acts confused. ....                                       | N S O A |
| 3. Has trouble following regular routines. ....                  | N S O A | 44. Worries about schoolwork. ....                            | N S O A |
| 4. Gives good suggestions for solving problems. ....             | N S O A | 45. Is fearful. ....  | N S O A |
| 5. Worries. ....   | N S O A | 46. Adjusts well to changes in routine. ....                  | N S O A |
| 6. Cannot wait to take turn. ....                                | N S O A | 47. Breaks the rules. ....                                    | N S O A |
| 7. Is easily annoyed by others. ....                             | N S O A | 48. Avoids competing with other children. ....                | N S O A |
| 8. Teases others. ....   | N S O A | 49. Pays attention when being spoken to. ....                 | N S O A |
| 9. Has a short attention span. ....                              | N S O A | 50. Complains about not having friends. ....                  | N S O A |
| 10. Is easily upset. ....  | N S O A | 51. Is good at getting people to work together. ....          | N S O A |
| 11. Does strange things. ....                                    | N S O A | 52. Acts out of control. ....                                 | N S O A |
| 12. Worries about what teachers think. ....                      | N S O A | 53. Is chosen last by other children for games. ....          | N S O A |
| 13. Is too serious. ....   | N S O A | 54. Complains of pain. ....                                   | N S O A |
| 14. Recovers quickly after a setback. ....                       | N S O A | 55. Repeats one thought over and over. ....                   | N S O A |
| 15. Disobeys. ....   | N S O A | 56. Argues when denied own way. ....                          | N S O A |
| 16. Makes friends easily. ....                                   | N S O A | 57. Is shy with other children. ....                          | N S O A |
| 17. Pays attention. ....   | N S O A | 58. Threatens to hurt others. ....                            | N S O A |
| 18. Complains about being teased. ....                           | N S O A | 59. Has stomach problems. ....                                | N S O A |
| 19. Joins clubs or social groups. ....                           | N S O A | 60. Says, "Nobody likes me." ....                             | N S O A |
| 20. Is unable to slow down. ....                                 | N S O A | 61. Lies to get out of trouble. ....                          | N S O A |
| 21. Refuses to join group activities. ....                       | N S O A | 62. Says, "I think I'm sick." ....                            | N S O A |
| 22. Has seizures. ....   | N S O A | 63. Encourages others to do their best. ....                  | N S O A |
| 23. Babbles to self. ....  | N S O A | 64. Tries too hard to please others. ....                     | N S O A |
| 24. Bullies others. ....   | N S O A | 65. Adjusts well to new teachers. ....                        | N S O A |
| 25. Will change direction to avoid having to greet someone. .... | N S O A | 66. Speaks in short phrases that are hard to understand. .... | N S O A |
| 26. Hits other children. ....                                    | N S O A | 67. Sets realistic goals. ....                                | N S O A |
| 27. Eats things that are not food. ....                          | N S O A | 68. Is creative. ....   | N S O A |
| 28. Cries easily. ....   | N S O A | 69. Is nervous. ....  | N S O A |
| 29. Steals. ....   | N S O A | 70. Fiddles with things while at meals. ....                  | N S O A |
| 30. Expresses fear of getting sick. ....                         | N S O A | 71. Volunteers to help clean up around the house. ....        | N S O A |
| 31. Congratulates others when good things happen to them. ....   | N S O A | 72. Annoys others on purpose. ....                            | N S O A |
| 32. Worries about making mistakes. ....                          | N S O A | 73. Is easily distracted. ....                                | N S O A |
| 33. Is easily soothed when angry. ....                           | N S O A | 74. Is negative about things. ....                            | N S O A |
| 34. Provides own telephone number when asked. ....               | N S O A | 75. Seems out of touch with reality. ....                     | N S O A |
| 35. Acts in a safe manner. ....                                  | N S O A | 76. Answers telephone properly. ....                          | N S O A |
| 36. Is a "self-starter." ....                                    | N S O A | 77. Worries about things that cannot be changed. ....         | N S O A |
| 37. Worries about what parents think. ....                       | N S O A | 78. Adjusts well to changes in family plans. ....             | N S O A |
| 38. Disrupts other children's activities. ....                   | N S O A | 79. Deceives others. ....                                     | N S O A |
| 39. Organizes chores or other tasks well. ....                   | N S O A | 80. Quickly joins group activities. ....                      | N S O A |
| 40. Argues with parents. ....                                    | N S O A |   |         |
| 41. Listens to directions. ....                                  | N S O A |   |         |

Remember: N – Never    S – Sometimes    O – Often    A – Almost always

- |   |         |  |         |
|---|---------|--|---------|
| 81. Is unclear when presenting ideas. . . .       | N S O A | 121. Has trouble making new friends. . . .     | N S O A |
| 82. Says, "I don't have any friends." . . . .     | N S O A | 122. Responds appropriately when               |         |
| 83. Is usually chosen as a leader. . . . .        | N S O A | asked a question. . . . .                      | N S O A |
| 84. Is overly active. . . . .                     | N S O A | 123. Is afraid of getting sick. . . . .        | N S O A |
| 85. Offers help to other children. . . . .        | N S O A | 124. Seems lonely. . . . .                     | N S O A |
| 86. Has headaches. . . . .                        | N S O A | 125. Breaks the rules just to see              |         |
| 87. Acts as if other children are                 |         | what will happen. . . . .                      | N S O A |
| not there. . . . .                                | N S O A | 126. Complains of being sick when              |         |
| 88. Seeks revenge on others. . . . .              | N S O A | nothing is wrong. . . . .                      | N S O A |
| 89. Shows fear of strangers. . . . .              | N S O A | 127. Volunteers to help with things. . . . .   | N S O A |
| 90. Loses temper too easily. . . . .              | N S O A | 128. Says things that make no sense. . . . .   | N S O A |
| 91. Complains about health. . . . .               | N S O A | 129. Throws up after eating. . . . .           | N S O A |
| 92. Says, "I want to die" or                      |         | 130. Is clear when telling about               |         |
| "I wish I were dead." . . . .                     | N S O A | personal experiences. . . . .                  | N S O A |
| 93. Sneaks around. . . . .                        | N S O A | 131. Needs to be reminded                      |         |
| 94. Gets sick. . . . .                            | N S O A | to brush teeth. . . . .                        | N S O A |
| 95. Compliments others. . . . .                   | N S O A | 132. Makes decisions easily. . . . .           | N S O A |
| 96. Seems unaware of others. . . . .              | N S O A | 133. Says, "It's all my fault." . . . . .      | N S O A |
| 97. Is cruel to animals. . . . .                  | N S O A | 134. Interrupts parents when they              |         |
| 98. Has difficulty explaining rules               |         | are talking on the phone. . . . .              | N S O A |
| of games to others. . . . .                       | N S O A | 135. Has toileting accidents. . . . .          | N S O A |
| 99. Attends to issues of                          |         | 136. Is cruel to others. . . . .               | N S O A |
| personal safety. . . . .                          | N S O A | 137. Falls down. . . . .                       | N S O A |
| 100. Will speak up if the situation               |         | 138. Says, "I want to kill myself." . . . . .  | N S O A |
| calls for it. . . . .                             | N S O A | 139. Sees things that are not there. . . . .   | N S O A |
| 101. Says, "I'm afraid I will make                |         | 140. Accurately takes down messages. . . . .   | N S O A |
| a mistake." . . . . .                             | N S O A | 141. Worries about what other                  |         |
| 102. Interrupts others when they                  |         | children think. . . . .                        | N S O A |
| are speaking. . . . .                             | N S O A | 142. Is stubborn. . . . .                      | N S O A |
| 103. Has trouble fastening buttons                |         | 143. Sets fires. . . . .                       | N S O A |
| on clothing. . . . .                              | N S O A | 144. Prefers to be alone. . . . .              | N S O A |
| 104. Calls other children names. . . . .          | N S O A | 145. Has trouble getting information           |         |
| 105. Listens carefully. . . . .                   | N S O A | when needed. . . . .                           | N S O A |
| 106. Says, "I hate myself." . . . . .             | N S O A | 146. Eats too little. . . . .                  | N S O A |
| 107. Hears sounds that are not there. . . . .     | N S O A | 147. Runs away from home. . . . .              | N S O A |
| 108. Is able to describe feelings                 |         | 148. Has poor self-control. . . . .            | N S O A |
| accurately. . . . .                               | N S O A | 149. Shows interest in others' ideas. . . . .  | N S O A |
| 109. Says, "I'm not very good at this." . . . . . | N S O A | 150. Vomits. . . . .                           | N S O A |
| 110. Is a "good sport." . . . . .                 | N S O A | 151. Shows feelings that do not fit            |         |
| 111. Lies. . . . .                                | N S O A | the situation. . . . .                         | N S O A |
| 112. Avoids other children. . . . .               | N S O A | 152. Has eye problems. . . . .                 | N S O A |
| 113. Tracks down information                      |         | 153. Is shy with adults. . . . .               | N S O A |
| when needed. . . . .                              | N S O A | 154. Communicates clearly. . . . .             | N S O A |
| 114. Is sad. . . . .                              | N S O A | 155. Wets bed. . . . .                         | N S O A |
| 115. Has a hearing problem. . . . .               | N S O A | 156. Changes moods quickly. . . . .            | N S O A |
| 116. Acts without thinking. . . . .               | N S O A | 157. Gets into trouble. . . . .                | N S O A |
| 117. Tries to bring out the best                  |         | 158. Complains of shortness of breath. . . . . | N S O A |
| in other people. . . . .                          | N S O A | 159. Says, "please" and "thank you." . . . . . | N S O A |
| 118. Has fevers. . . . .                          | N S O A | 160. Acts strangely. . . . .                   | N S O A |
| 119. Stares blankly. . . . .                      | N S O A |  |         |
| 120. Sleeps with parents. . . . .                 | N S O A |  |         |

## Appendix L

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972)

## MC-SD (Strahan &amp; Gerbasi, 1972)

For the following questions please mark an X for "T" True or "F" False.

	T	F
1. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I like to gossip sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I'm always willing to admit when I make a mistake.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I sometimes try to get even, rather than forgive and forget.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I have never been annoyed when people expressed ideas very different from my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>